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The Action Team



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Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

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Learning Together

The Action Team

Winter 2002

Ruth Anne Landsverk



Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Madison, Wisconsin

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Foreword

Family-school-community partnerships benefit everyone—students, most of all. Schools that help each child reach his or her full potential are schools that tap into the interest, talents, and, especially, that bottomless supply of love that parents and families have for their children.

I look forward to helping family-school-community partnerships grow and flourish in Wisconsin. As a teacher and school administrator, I have experienced, first-hand, the power that parents and families wield over a child's capacity to learn enthusiastically and with true investment of body, mind, and spirit. Conversely, I have heard the frustration in the voices of parents who have been cut off from their children's school lives. I have also listened to the anguish in the voices of teachers who talk about parents unwilling or unable to extend even a basic level of support to their children's school lives.

Now, as State Superintendent, growing effective partnerships will be a priority in my administration. Most Wisconsin families and schools do an exemplary job of working together to help children learn. I want to work to ensure that all children in every school have those opportunities.

As a constructive way to start, I am pleased to present this Learning Together packet, dedicated to examining the Partnership Action Team. It offers your school a road map to creating and maintaining effective partnerships.

Please take a few minutes to read through this booklet. Then put it in the capable hands of a staff member, parent coordinator, volunteer, or committee member who will help the ideas in this booklet bear fruit. I ask only that you give your personal support to the growth of partnerships in your school, district, and community.

How much is the sparkle in a happy child's eye worth? That's the value of partnerships.

Elizabeth Burmaster
State Superintendent

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Special thanks to Dr. Joyce Epstein, director of the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University, and her staff for use and adaptation of materials in this publication which they originally researched and developed.

Introduction

Most everyone agrees that family-school-community partnerships are needed. In Wisconsin, family-school-community partnerships are a basic building block—one of the seven Characteristics of Successful Schools.* Many people, however, are uncertain about how to implement partnerships. Since the Action Team is the active ingredient in successful programs of partnership, this Learning Together packet is devoted to explaining the details of how Action Teams work.

Much of the information about Action Teams used here comes from the research of Dr. Joyce Epstein, Director of the National Network of Partnership Schools. Wisconsin is proud to be one of six charter state members to join the Network in 1995. Since then, about 100 Wisconsin districts and schools have joined the Network and are now linked to the research and publications of the Center for Family, School, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University, as well as to all members' ideas, encouragement, and experiences.

We urge Wisconsin schools to join the Network as a way of strengthening their partnership programs. There is no cost to joining, only a sincere commitment to helping all children become better learners by reaching out to their first and most important teachers—their parents and family members.

For more information about the National Network, please visit its website at www.partnershipschoools.org. Or, visit the DPI Family-School-Community Partnership website at www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlcl/bbfcsp/fcsphome.html. Feel free to contact us with your questions, ideas, and experiences.

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**The seven characteristics that comprise a successful school are:*

1. Vision: having a common understanding of goals, principles and expectations for everyone in the learning-community
2. Leadership: having a group of individuals dedicated to helping the learning-community reach its vision
3. High Academic Standards: describing what students need to know and be able to do
4. Standards of the Heart: helping all within the learning community become caring, contributing, productive, and responsible citizens
5. Family School and Community Partnerships: “making room at the table” for a child’s first and most influential teachers
6. Professional Development: providing consistent, meaningful opportunities for adults in the school setting to engage in continuous learning
7. Evidence of Success: collecting and analyzing data about students, programs, and staff.

The DPI guide describing the Characteristics of Successful Schools is available for downloading from the DPI website: www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/sit/cssfrwd.htm.



Part 1

Starting Up

Basics for the Action Team: Your School's Partnership Arm

Ten Steps for Action Teams

What Can Parents Do? Family Roles in School

Assessing Your Partnership Strengths and Weaknesses

Practical Ideas for Gathering Information

Are We Family-Friendly? (Sample Survey)

Frequently Asked Questions About Action Teams

Partnership Organizers

Sample Practices

Challenges and Redefinitions

Expected Results for Students, Parents, and Teachers

Linking Partnership Practices to Learning Goals

The Action Team Structure

Sample One-Year Action Plan Form

Making a Difference: Measuring Results, Evaluating Progress

Basics for the Action Team **Your School's Partnership Arm**

The job of building effective family-school-community partnerships is too big for any one person to do alone. Most schools already have a curriculum or long-range planning committee in place to plan and carry out activities. Similarly, a team of parents, teachers, administrators, and others is needed to solicit ideas, plan, carry out, and evaluate a solid program of partnerships. This group, the Action Team for Family, School, and Community Partnerships, works to ensure that the six types of partnerships are implemented in ways that help reach the school's learning goals for children, engage all families in learning, and improve the school environment.

The Action Team approach ensures that work is shared and reduces the likelihood that partnerships will end if one active person leaves the school. Here are some **"guiding principles"** about the function and design of the Action Team that will help it work effectively:

The Action Team should use all six types of partnerships in engaging families. The six types can guide the development of a balanced, comprehensive program of partnerships that offers opportunities for learning at home, in school, and in the community with important results for students, families, and teachers.

The Action Team should not be "one more committee." Partnerships should not be "one more thing to do" for already over-worked teachers and administrators, but should be a part of the school's total program of how it helps children learn, how it operates, and how it plans to reach learning goals. Similarly the Action Team should be linked to the school's curriculum committee, long-range planning committee, or site-based management team, share members from each, and help guide how all six types of partnerships are integrated into school programs and goals under one, unified plan for partnerships.

The Action Team will look and feel different in every school. Because people and their needs vary in every community, schools' responses will also vary.

What works in one building may not work in another. The most effective Action Teams develop partnership efforts tailored to meet the unique needs of the children, families, and staff in that school.

Family-school-community partnerships should focus on improving student learning. Although some partnership practices will contribute in a more general way to improving the overall school environment, partnership goals should directly link to student learning. Joyce Epstein recommends that Action Teams develop four one-year goals; two goals should focus on improving academic achievement; one should focus on improving school relationships or the school environment in a non-academic area; and one should focus on strengthening school partnerships. Partnership results depend upon achieving partnership goals. While some partnership practices aim to make the school more welcoming or increase student self-respect, other practices will aim to increase math and reading achievement, student attendance, or at-home learning.

Everyone should know about the work of the Action Team and feel welcome to join in on its work. Staff, parents, and students need to be aware of what learning or school improvement goals the school has set and that a partnership program exists to help the school reach those goals. The Action Team can be instrumental in helping to continually disseminate this information.

The work of the Action Team is a process, not a one-time event. Research from the Center for School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University has shown that *three years* is the minimum time needed for an action team to establish its work as a productive and permanent part of the school. Progress in partnerships is incremental, including more families each year in ways that benefit students. Like other curricular or sports programs, partnership programs take time to develop, should be periodically reviewed, and should be continuously improved.



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Family-School-Community Partnerships **Ten Steps for Action Teams**

The following steps are meant to guide schools and districts as they set up their Action Teams and organize their Family-School-Community Partnership programs.

1. Create an Action Team for Partnerships
2. Designate funds
3. Gather information
4. Identify strengths and starting points
5. Write a One-Year Action Plan
6. Develop a Three-Year Outline
7. Enlist staff, parents, students, and community members to help conduct activities
8. Evaluate implementations and results
9. Conduct annual celebrations and report progress to all participants
10. Continue working toward a comprehensive, on-going, positive program of partnerships

Adapted from School, Family, and Community Partnerships by J.L. Epstein et al., 1997 Corwin Press, Inc.

What Can Parents Do?

Family Roles in Schools

Many educators and parents search for ways to involve parents in children's learning and in school governance. The relationships that blossom among parents, teachers, school administrators, and students are often more important than the activities, themselves.

Following, is a brief list of ideas, many of which may not require parents to set foot on school grounds. They are not in any particular order. Add your own ideas to this list, using the opportunities and desires of your school and its families!

Parents can serve as:

- Members of task forces
- Advisory committee members
- Program evaluators
- Co-trainers for pre-services or inservices
- Paid program staff
- Mentors for families
- Grant reviewers
- Participants in the needs assessment process
- Reviewers of audiovisual and written materials
- Group facilitators
- At-home or in-school volunteers
- Community advocates
- Participants in focus groups
- Fund raisers
- Participants at conferences
- Participants in long-range planning or improvement initiatives
- Planners and distributors of school surveys
- Planners and workers at school events
- Tutors of students
- Other

Assessing Your Partnership

Strengths and Weaknesses

The action team works to improve and systematize haphazard patterns of involvement. It starts by collecting information about the school's present practices of partnership, along with the views, experiences, and wishes of parents, teachers, administrators, and students. In assessing what it does, perhaps the central question Action Team members must ask is: *How can good practices be organized and extended so they can be used by all teachers at all grade levels with all families?*

The checklist on pages 46-47 offer ideas to help your school or district assess what kinds of partnership activities are presently conducted, which of the six types it does well, and where it needs to improve or expand opportunities for parents and families to link to children's learning or connect with the school itself.

Areas to Consider

Gathering information is a critical first step in assessing your partnership practices. The following areas should be addressed in information gathering:

Present strengths. Which practices of family-school-community partnerships are now working well for the school as a whole? For individual grade levels? For which types of partnership?

Needed changes. Ideally, how do we want family-school-community partnerships to work at this school three years from now? Which present practices should continue and which should change? To reach school goals, what new practices are needed for each of the major types of involvement?

Expectations. What do teachers expect of families? What do families expect of teachers and other school staff? What do students expect their families to do to help them negotiate school life? What do students expect their teachers to do to keep their families informed and involved?

Sense of community. Which families are we now reaching, and which are we not yet reaching? What might be done to communicate with and engage all families in their children's education? Do partnership practices include all families, or are families whose

children receive special services separated from other families?

Links to goals. How are students faring on measures of academic achievement such as report cards; on measures of attitude and attendance; and on other indicators of success? How might family and community connections assist the school in helping more students reach higher goals and achieve greater success? Which partnership practices would directly connect to and support each school goal?

Questions Action Teams Must Ask

When your Action Team is ready to sit down and put some plans on paper, the following important questions will provide guideposts for changing present practices or implementing new practices.

- Which partnership practices are presently **strong at each grade level**? Which are weak? Which should continue? Expand? Be dropped? Be added?
- How do partnership practices address **families' needs** and the wishes parents have expressed about keeping informed and involved in their children's learning?
- How do partnership practices strengthen the learning goals that **teachers** have for students and the help or time they need to achieve those goals?
- Are practices coherent and **coordinated or fragmented**? How are families of children in Title 1, special education, bilingual and other programs part of a school-wide program of partnerships?
- Which **families** are you reaching, and which are you not yet reaching? How might all families be included?
- What do **students** expect their families to do to help them with school life and homework? What do students want their schools to do to inform and involve their families?
- What goals do you want your program of family-school-community partnerships to achieve **this year**?
- How do you want your program of family-school-community partnerships to look **three years** from now?



Practical Ideas for Gathering Information

Once your team is formed and you have identified a team chair and a source of funding, it's important to start gathering information to assess what partnership practices your school presently conducts, along with the views and experiences of teachers, parents, students, administrators, and other school staff.

Here are some ways that partnership schools in Wisconsin gather information from members of the school community:

- Written surveys
- Telephone surveys
- Parent forums
- Family and community town suppers
- Suggestion boxes placed at school entrances
- Panelists of parents and teachers
- Lunches or breakfasts with the principal
- Focus groups
- Home visits
- Home-school folders or journals

How these efforts are carried out depends on the circumstances, creativity, and commitment of each school or district. Following, are some examples of creative data-gathering in Wisconsin schools:



- In one school, sixth-grade students, fortified by cookies and equipped with clipboard and surveys, were assigned the task of "interviewing" parents at the school's open house.

- One school district offers teachers a stipend during the summer to conduct end-of-year surveys of families

in their homes. The survey addresses questions of how parents feel about their children's learning that year, as well as broader questions about how the district can better serve the needs of the family.

- Another school gives teachers time each week during school hours to devote exclusively to communicating with parents and developing ways to keep families connected with children's classroom learning. The

phone numbers and hours during which teachers can be reached are well publicized, and families are encouraged to call teachers with any questions or concerns about their child's learning.

- School board members from one smaller district take turns staffing a desk at the local library one evening a month to listen to parents' and community members' school-related comments and concerns. The hours and location for the listening sessions are advertised in several ways throughout the community.

Sample Survey

Following, is a simple survey your Action Team can use to gain a sense of how families feel about the ways your school keeps them informed and involved. Parents can fill this survey out in a few minutes at your next school event or PTA meeting. Be sure that parents for whom English is not their native language have the assistance they need to complete the survey or are able to comment on these questions in another manner.

Are We Family-Friendly?

Dear Parent or Guardian,

We want to make sure that we are a family-friendly school! Please help us understand how we are doing—and where we might improve—by filling out the following survey. If you have additional comments, feel free to add them on the back. Please return the completed survey to the school office.

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Usually	Always
I like walking into my child's school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School personnel are friendly to me when I visit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School personnel are friendly to me when I call.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel included in my child's school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child's school keeps me well-informed about:					
...how my child is doing in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...what my child is learning in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...what my child needs to be learning in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...how I can help my child at home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...school policies and procedures.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...school activities and events.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...PTA, PTO or other parent-teacher organizations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
At my child's school:					
...our family's culture, ethnicity, religion are respected.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...I feel listened to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...my opinions are sought and valued.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...I am treated like a partner in my child's education.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child's school lets me know when and where volunteer help is needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child's school has made good use of my talents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have been asked to help out with a school activity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have been invited to participate on a school committee.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel appreciated for things I've done to help the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can easily reach my child's teacher if I need to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If there is a problem at school, I know whom to contact.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Problems related to my child are addressed quickly and fairly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

To be more family-friendly, my child's school or teacher could... _____

Frequently Asked Questions about Action Teams

Who should be on the Action Team?

The Action Team should have from six to 12 members, including:

- Two to three teachers from different grade levels
- Two to three parents with children at different grade levels
- At least one school administrator
- One member from the community-at-large
- In middle and high schools, at least two students from different grade levels
- Other staff members who contribute to a positive school environment for children and families: a food service worker, a maintenance worker, a bus driver, or a school counselor.

One member should also serve on the school improvement team and one member should be willing to act as a liaison with the school's parent-teacher organization. Members should be asked to serve for a term of one or two years, and may be invited to renew their membership.

Select a chair for the Action Team who has the respect of other members and can communicate well with families and educators.

Responsibilities of the Action Team?

The Action Team Chair coordinates, facilitates, and manages the operation of the team. The Chair:

- manages the team with subcommittee chairs, assistants, and helpers for all six types of partnerships and activities.
- delegates responsibilities to all action team members and helps them overcome obstacles.
- schedules meetings to ensure progress—not too few or too many.
- moves plans along, periodically revisiting the team's Action Plan.
- communicates with and reaches out for assistance to all members of the action team, the school principal and faculty, the school improvement team, the school partnership coordinator, and families.

Action Team efforts should also be communicated through school newsletters, websites, and other media so all families feel informed and welcome to help.

How often should the Action Team meet?

This is a group decision. Many Action Teams meet monthly during the school year, as program activities demand. Some teams have found it extremely valuable to set aside time during the summer to think about and plan activities for the new school year.

How can an Action Team be funded?

A modest budget is needed to support the work of the Action Team. At least \$500 to \$1,000 a year should be set aside for Action Team expenses, as well as partnership activities. Funding can come from a wide variety of sources. Nearly all federally funded education programs have a strong parent-family involvement component and can be used to help fund partnership efforts. Such programs include Titles I, IV, VI, and VII. In Wisconsin, the SAGE program (Student Achievement Guarantee in Education) asks program schools to carry out family-school partnerships.

In past years, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has offered Goals 2000-funded seed grants to schools and districts engaging in partnership programs. Although the future of the Goals 2000 funds is uncertain, the DPI will continue to foster partnership efforts. CESAs may also be willing to offer or fund staff development opportunities that focus on family-school-community partnerships.

In addition, many schools have partnerships with local businesses, civic groups, or institutions of higher education that fund partnership efforts. In 2000-2001, DPI asked \$500 Wisconsin Partnership School seed grant recipients to provide matching funds to carry out their partnership plans. Here is a partial list of their funding sources:

- Local Rotary Club
- Local Optimists Club
- Joining Forces for Families Initiative
- 21st Century Community Learning Center Grants
- Title I
- America READS grants
- Comprehensive School Reform funds
- Gratis services of local printers, designers, restaurants, grocery stores, and students

Frequently Asked Questions about Action Teams *(continued)*

- Local PTAs and PTOs
- SAGE
- VISTA
- Americorps
- Title VI
- Local Principals' Budget
- Various school fundraisers
- Community Friends of the Arts group
- Local Kiwanis Club
- School Improvement funds
- Families And Schools Together program
- Title IV/AODA funds
- AASA Opening School House Doors grant
- Wisconsin Fatherhood Initiative
- Corporation for National Service Youth Service-Learning grants

Training Opportunities for Action Teams?

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's Family-School-Community Partnership Team offers a statewide conference or regional workshops every year. Each workshop generally presents information on the Six Types of Family-School-Community Partnerships, partnership stories shared by members of the Wisconsin and National Network of Partnership Schools, and ideas

for writing a One-Year Action Plan and linking partnership practices to children's learning.

For upcoming workshops, visit the DPI web site at www.dpi.state.wi.us or call Jane Grinde at 608-266-9356 or Ruth Anne Landsverk at 608-266-9757 at DPI.

The National Network of Partnership Schools also offers training opportunities twice-a-year at its headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland. For upcoming opportunities, visit the Network's web site at www.partnershipschools.org or contact Karen Clark Salinas at Johns Hopkins University, 3003 N Charles Street, Suite 200, Baltimore, MD 21218; or call 410-516-8818.

Ideas for fostering team spirit?

- Make sure each member of the team has a chance to share ideas and opinions
- Respect each member's contributions and efforts
- Offer simple refreshments at each meeting
- Lead with enthusiasm, good organization and communication, problem-solving skills, and an eye to the "big picture" of school, family, and community partnerships
- Help members develop leadership skills
- Take time to celebrate successes
- Offer time at each meeting for members to share personal observations or experiences
- Laugh!



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Partnership Organizers

Three Table Tools

1. What are some successful sample practices schools can consider for each Type of Family-Community Partnership?
2. What challenges can schools expect to encounter as they try to reach out to and involve all families in children's learning?
3. Why should schools and families spend time and energy on partnerships? What results can be expected for students, parents, and teachers involved in partnerships?

The three following tables, excerpted from *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*, provide answers to each of these questions. The tables are meant to be at-a-glance resources for school staff and parents searching for quick guidance and ideas to boost their own partnerships.

Be sure to review the "redefinitions" section of Table 1.2 for positive, inclusive descriptions of the people and practices comprising your school's program of partnerships.

TABLE 1.1

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement for Comprehensive Programs of Partnership, and Sample Practices

Type 1 Parenting	Type 2 Communicating	Type 3 Volunteering	Type 4 Learning at Home	Type 5 Decision Making	Type 6 Collaborating With Community
Help all families establish home environments to support children as students	Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school programs and their children's progress	Recruit and organize parent help and support	Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning	Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives	Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development

Sample Practices

<p>Suggestions for home conditions that support learning at each grade level</p> <p>Workshops, videotapes, computerized phone messages on parenting and child rearing for each age and grade level</p> <p>Parent education and other courses or training for parents (e.g., GED, college credit, family literacy)</p> <p>Family support programs to assist families with health, nutrition, and other services</p> <p>Home visits at transition points to preschool, elementary, middle, and high school; neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools understand families</p>	<p>Conference with every parent at least once a year, with follow-ups as needed</p> <p>Language translators assist families, as needed</p> <p>Weekly or monthly folders of student work sent home for review and comments</p> <p>Parent-student pick-up of report cards, with conferences on improving grades</p> <p>Regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, and other communications</p> <p>Clear information on choosing schools or courses, programs, and activities within schools</p> <p>Clear information on all school policies, programs, reforms, and transitions</p>	<p>School and classroom volunteer program to help teachers, administrators, students, and other parents</p> <p>Parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, resources for families</p> <p>Annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times, and locations of volunteers</p> <p>Class parent, telephone tree, or other structures to provide all families with needed information</p> <p>Parent patrols or other activities to aid safety and operation of school programs</p>	<p>Information for families on skills required for students in all subjects at each grade</p> <p>Information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home</p> <p>Information on how to assist students to improve skills on various class and school assessments</p> <p>Regular schedule of homework that requires students to discuss and interact with families on what they are learning in class</p> <p>Calendars with activities for parents and students to do at home or in the community</p> <p>Family math, science, and reading activities at school</p> <p>Summer learning packets or activities</p> <p>Family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for college or work</p>	<p>Active PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, advisory councils, or committees (e.g., curriculum, safety, personnel) for parent leadership and participation</p> <p>Independent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvements</p> <p>District-level councils and committees for family and community involvement</p> <p>Information on school or local elections for school representatives</p> <p>Networks to link all families with parent representatives</p>	<p>Information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs or services</p> <p>Information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students</p> <p>Service integration through partnerships involving school; civic, counseling, cultural, health, recreation, and other agencies and organizations; and businesses</p> <p>Service to the community by students, families, and schools (e.g., recycling, art, music, drama, and other activities for seniors or others)</p> <p>Participation of alumni in school programs for students</p>
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TABLE 1.2 Challenges and Redefinitions for the Successful Design and Implementation of the Six Types of Involvement

Challenges					
Type 1 Parenting	Type 2 Communicating	Type 3 Volunteering	Type 4 Learning at Home	Type 5 Decision Making	Type 6 Collaborating With Community
<p>Provide information to all families who want it or who need it, not just to the few who can attend workshops or meetings at the school building</p> <p>Enable families to share information about culture, background, children's talents and needs</p> <p>Make sure that all information is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school</p>	<p>Review the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and nonprint communications</p> <p>Consider parents who do not speak English well, do not read well, or need large type</p> <p>Review the quality of major communications, (e.g., the schedule, content, and structure of conferences; newsletters; report cards; and others</p> <p>Establish clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home</p>	<p>Recruit volunteers widely so that <i>all</i> families know that their time and talents are welcome</p> <p>Make flexible schedules for volunteers, assemblies, and events to enable employed parents to participate</p> <p>Organize volunteer work; provide training; match time and talent with school, teacher, and student needs; and recognize efforts so that participants are productive</p>	<p>Design and organize a regular schedule of interactive homework (e.g., weekly or bimonthly) that gives <i>students</i> responsibility for discussing important things they are learning, and helps families stay aware of the content of their children's classwork</p> <p>Coordinate family-linked homework activities, if students have several teachers</p> <p>Involve families with their children in all important curriculum-related decisions</p>	<p>Include parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups in the school</p> <p>Offer training to enable leaders to serve as representatives of other families, with input from and return of information to all parents</p> <p>Include students (along with parents) in decision-making groups</p>	<p>Solve turf problems of responsibilities, funds, staff, and locations for collaborative activities</p> <p>Inform families of community programs for students, such as mentoring, tutoring, and business partnerships</p> <p>Assure equity of opportunities for students and families to participate in community programs or to obtain services</p> <p>Match community contributions with school goals; integrate child and family services with education</p>
Redefinitions					
<p>"Workshop" to mean more than a <i>meeting</i> about a topic held at the school building at a particular time; "workshop" also may mean making information about a topic available in a variety of forms that can be viewed, heard, or read anywhere, anytime</p>	<p>"Communications about school programs and student progress" to mean: two-way, three-way, and many-way channels of communication that connect schools, families, students, and the community</p>	<p>"Volunteer" to mean anyone who supports school goals and children's learning or development in any way, at any place, and at any time—not just during the school day and at the school building</p>	<p>"Homework" to mean not only work done alone, but also interactive activities shared with others at home or in the community, linking schoolwork to real life</p> <p>"Help" at home to mean encouraging, listening, reacting, praising, guiding, monitoring, and discussing—not "teaching" school subjects</p>	<p>"Decision making" to mean a process of partnership, of shared views and actions toward shared goals, not just a power struggle between conflicting ideas</p> <p>Parent "leader" to mean a real representative, with opportunities and support to hear from and communicate with other families</p>	<p>"Community" to mean not only the neighborhoods where students' homes and schools are located but also any neighborhoods that influence their learning and development</p> <p>"Community" rated not only by low or high social or economic qualities, but by strengths and talents to support students, families, and schools</p> <p>"Community" means all who are interested in and affected by the quality of education, not just those with children in the schools</p>

TABLE 1.3

Expected Results for Students, Parents, and Teachers of the Six Types of Involvement

Results for Students					
Type 1 Parenting	Type 2 Communicating	Type 3 Volunteering	Type 4 Learning at Home	Type 5 Decision Making	Type 6 Collaborating With Community
<p>Awareness of family supervision; respect for parents</p> <p>Positive personal qualities, habits, beliefs, and values, as taught by family</p> <p>Balance between time spent on chores, on other activities, and on homework</p> <p>Good or improved attendance</p> <p>Awareness of importance of school</p>	<p>Awareness of own progress and of actions needed to maintain or improve grades</p> <p>Understanding of school policies on behavior, attendance, and other areas of student conduct</p> <p>Informed decisions about courses and programs</p> <p>Awareness of own role in partnerships, serving as courier and communicator</p>	<p>Skill in communicating with adults</p> <p>Increased learning of skills that receive tutoring or targeted attention from volunteers</p> <p>Awareness of many skills, talents, occupations, and contributions of parents and other volunteers</p>	<p>Gains in skills, abilities, and test scores linked to homework and classwork</p> <p>Homework completion</p> <p>Positive attitude toward schoolwork</p> <p>View of parent as more similar to teacher, and home as more similar to school</p> <p>Self-concept of ability as learner</p>	<p>Awareness of representation of families in school decisions</p> <p>Understanding that student rights are protected</p> <p>Specific benefits linked to policies enacted by parent organizations and experienced by students</p>	<p>Increased skills and talents through enriched curricular and extracurricular experiences</p> <p>Awareness of careers and options for future education and work</p> <p>Specific benefits linked to programs, services, resources, and opportunities that connect students with community</p>
Results for Parents					
<p>Understanding of and confidence about parenting, child and adolescent development, and changes in home conditions for learning as children proceed through school</p> <p>Awareness of own and others' challenges in parenting</p> <p>Feeling of support from school and other parents</p>	<p>Understanding school programs and policies</p> <p>Monitoring and awareness of child's progress</p> <p>Responding effectively to child's problems</p> <p>Interactions with teachers and ease of communication with school and teachers</p>	<p>Understanding teacher's job, increased comfort in school, and carryover of school activities at home</p> <p>Self-confidence about ability to work in school and with children, or to take steps to improve own education</p> <p>Awareness that families are welcome and valued at school</p> <p>Gains in specific skills of volunteer work</p>	<p>Know how to support, encourage, and help student at home each year</p> <p>Discussions of school, classwork, and homework</p> <p>Understanding of instructional program each year and of what child is learning in each subject</p> <p>Appreciation of teaching skills</p> <p>Awareness of child as a learner</p>	<p>Input into policies that affect child's education</p> <p>Feeling of ownership of school</p> <p>Awareness of parents' voices in school decisions</p> <p>Shared experiences and connections with other families</p> <p>Awareness of school, district, and state policies</p>	<p>Knowledge and use of local resources by family and child to increase skills and talents, or to obtain needed services</p> <p>Interactions with other families in community activities</p> <p>Awareness of school's role in the community, and of the community's contributions to the school</p>
Results for Teachers					
<p>Understanding families' backgrounds, cultures, concerns, goals, needs, and views of their children</p> <p>Respect for families' strengths and efforts</p> <p>Understanding of student diversity</p> <p>Awareness of own skills to share information on child development</p>	<p>Increased diversity and use of communications with families and awareness of own ability to communicate clearly</p> <p>Appreciation and use of parent network for communications</p> <p>Increased ability to elicit and understand family views on children's programs and progress</p>	<p>Readiness to involve families in new ways, including those who do not volunteer at school</p> <p>Awareness of parent talents and interests in school and children</p> <p>Greater individual attention to students, with help from volunteers</p>	<p>Better design of homework assignments</p> <p>Respect of family time</p> <p>Recognition of equal helpfulness of single parent, dual income, and less formally educated families in motivating and reinforcing student learning</p> <p>Satisfaction with family involvement and support</p>	<p>Awareness of parent perspectives as a factor in policy development and decisions</p> <p>View of equal status of family representatives on committees and in leadership roles</p>	<p>Awareness of community resources to enrich curriculum and instruction</p> <p>Openness to and skill in using mentors, business partners, community volunteers, and others to assist students and augment teaching practice</p> <p>Knowledgeable, helpful referrals of children and families to needed services</p>



Linking Partnership Practices to Learning Goals

The National Network of Partnership Schools encourages each member school or district to develop four goals as part of its One-Year Action Plan:

- Two academic goals
- One non-academic goal, and
- One partnership-strengthening goal.

Following, are examples of goals and activities that Wisconsin Action Teams have identified in their One-Year Action Plans. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction for the past several years, has offered Goals 2000-funded \$500 seed grants to schools willing to form Partnership Action Teams and to join the Wisconsin and National Network of Partnership Schools.

The goals were designated after the Action Teams gathered data on the views and experiences of school families, teachers, other staff, and students. The partnership goals also advance the school's learning goals. The final One-Year Action Plan should have the consensus of Action Team members.

Sample ACADEMIC Goals and Supporting Activities

GOAL: To increase at-home student learning in reading and language arts

Activities

- Hold Get-to-Know-You conferences for all students and families in Grades K-2 at start of school year.
- Expand monthly Parent And Child Together learning sessions in school Parent Center to Grades 4 and 5.
- Design Home-School Compact.
- Obtain a VISTA volunteer through AmericaReads initiative to help with literacy efforts.

GOAL: To increase K-12 student math achievement in district.

Activities

- Host a Community Conversation for parents and community members to discuss the district's standardized test scores and state assessments.
- Place student textbooks and math-related learning resources in the district's Family Resource Centers.

- Host a Family Math Night.
- Place At-Risk Coordinators in each school building to assist with student academic, social, and emotional needs.

GOAL: To better use volunteers to strengthen elementary students' learning in reading and math.

Activities

- Train volunteers in effective math and reading strategies
- Communicate math and reading strategies at parent-teacher group meetings and in school publications such as newsletters, parent handbook, etc.
- Survey volunteers on their comfort level, level of effectiveness, and attention of students
- Organize volunteers from two local businesses to work weekly with students in Grades 2 and 3.

Sample NON-ACADEMIC Goals and Supporting Activities

GOAL: To increase student self-respect and respect for others in elementary school

Activities

- Implement DPI Standards of the Heart initiative
- Provide families with materials and ideas to help children develop respectful attitudes and behavior
- Increase volunteer corps, especially among senior citizens and business community members
- Initiate Youth Service-Learning Program with students and families.

GOAL: To increase student attendance at school

Activities

- Hold monthly "Breakfast with the Principal" gatherings with parents at school to discuss issues and form relationships
- Make home visits to students' families
- Start "Families Mentoring Families" program
- Recognize students for exemplary attendance

Linking Partnership Practices to Learning Goals (*continued*)

Sample PARTNERSHIP-STRENGTHENING Goals and Supporting Activities

GOAL: To create a more welcoming school environment for families

Activities

- Establish a Family Corner in the school lobby, providing comfortable chairs, a suggestion box, resource shelf, student exhibits, and hot coffee
- Use parent volunteers as school “greeters” to welcome parents and answer questions
- Develop and implement plan to welcome new families and provide them with materials about the school and community
- Inservice all school staff on the need to welcome and respect families

GOAL: To build a trusting relationship and strengthen at-home literacy efforts with Hmong parents.

Activities

- Conduct home visits to meet Hmong parents, discuss the importance of reading or sharing stories with young children, and give them a literacy tote bag.*
- Provide translated written materials from school and a translator for Hmong parents at school meetings.
- Invite Hmong parents to participate in early learning activities at the school.
- Offer public library cards to Hmong parents.

** A VISTA volunteer at the school funded home visits. The local Optimists Club paid for tote bags.*



The Action Team Structure

A school or district Action Team cannot effectively function without being connected to larger school improvement efforts. Many schools ask a member of the School Improvement Team to serve as a member of the Action Team and act as a liaison between the two groups. Many Action Teams also invite a member of the local PTA or other parent group to sit on the Action Team.

In Wisconsin, Action Teams are encouraged to focus upon accomplishing four goals each year, based upon the needs of students, families, and staff members:

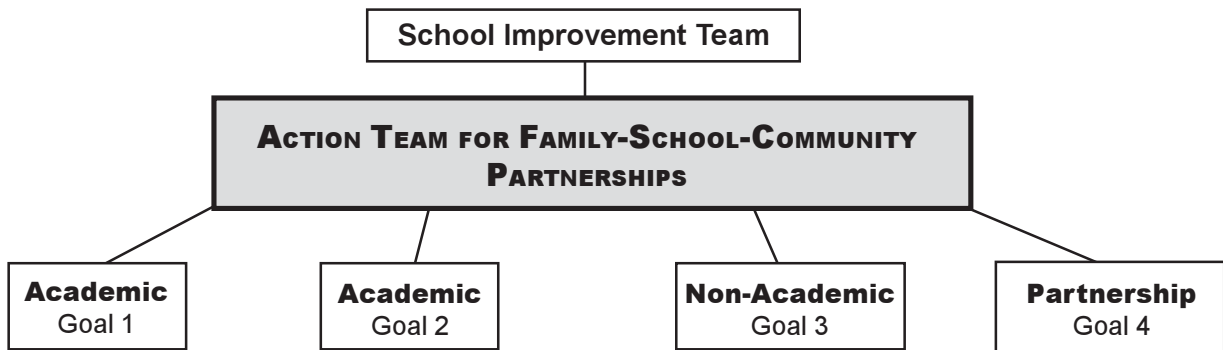
- two academic goals
- one non-academic goal, and

- one partnership-strengthening goal

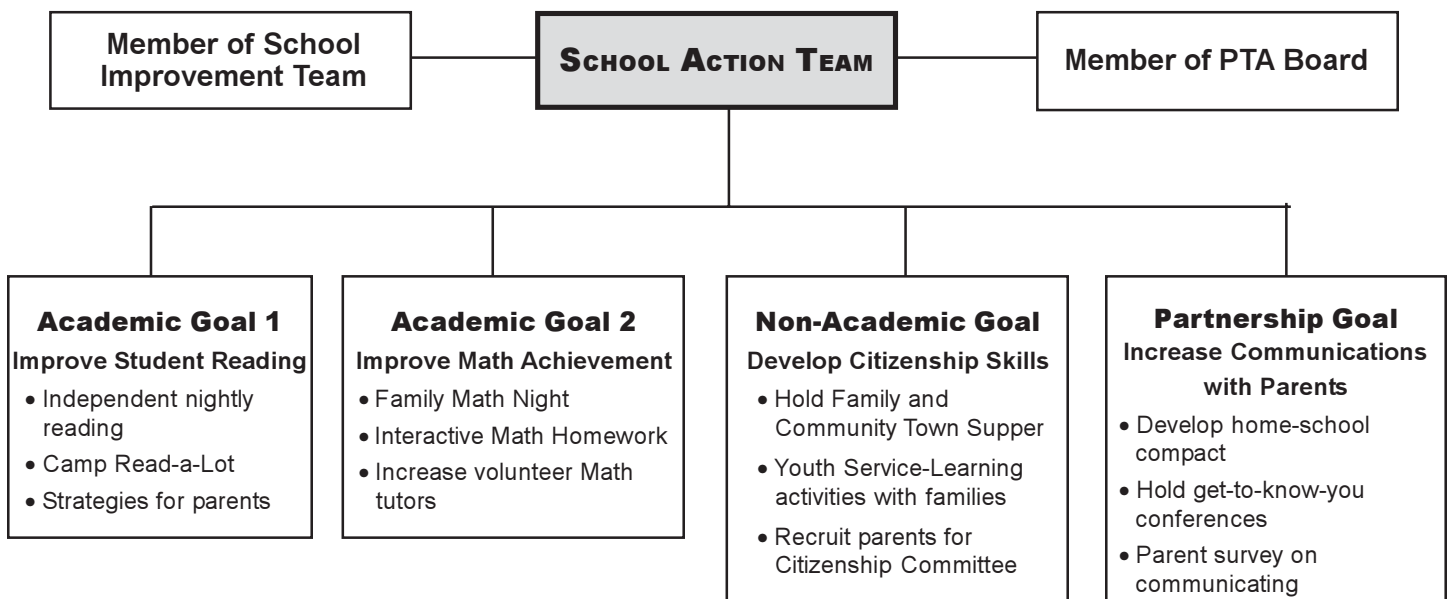
By choosing a few goals with a specific focus, Action Teams have found that they have the time and ability to thoroughly examine and act upon each of the goals. The teams then draw from the Six Types of Family-School-Community Partnerships to develop family-friendly activities that meet their goals. The Framework for the “Six Types” can be found on page 45.

Following, are two examples of Action Team structures and activities: a General Example and a sample One-year Action Plan. A blank reproducible One-Year Action Plan form can be found on page 48.

General Example



Example School



Sample One-Year Action Plan

School or District _____

School Year _____

- List ONE of your school's major goals for the school year. *(Make copies of this page for each of your school's major goals.)*
- List the specific, measurable results that will show you have reached this goal.

ONE Major Goal: All students will participate in one service-learning project during the school year. Parents will have an opportunity to participate in the project with their child.

Desired results for this goal:

- To have a greater sense of community within the school.
- To increase students, families' and community members' understanding of the topic connected to the service-learning project.
- To instill in students a stronger sense of the benefits of and need for community service.

How will you measure these results?

We will conduct a pre- and post-project survey of participants' attitudes. We will also examine student performance assessments.

Partnership Practices to reach this goal:

Below, write down partnership practices that will help you reach your goal. Your activities should represent more than one of the six types of partnership. Use the following section also to organize and schedule activities that support this goal.

Practice (continuing or new)	Date of Activity	Grade Level(s)	What Needs to Be Done for Practice and When	Persons in Charge and Helping
Professional staff development training— parents will be invited	April	all	Seek trainer and arrange for inservice	Teacher and parent from PTO
Hold family classroom suppers to discuss service-learning	Sept.-Oct.	all	Schedule suppers, arrange for facilitators	Two parents and a teacher from each classroom
Brainstorming and planning for service-learning project	Oct.-Dec.	all		Teacher and students
Reflect upon and evaluate project	April-May	all		Teacher and students

Any extra funds, supplies, or resources needed for these activities? Title 1 and AODA funds will help support this project.



Learning Together

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Making a Difference: Measuring Results, Evaluating Progress

Taking a look back at how and what your school accomplished with partnerships doesn't have to be complicated, but it should be attempted. If your Three-Year Outline and your One-Year Action Plans help your Action Team decide where to go, evaluating your progress will help reveal how your team "got there" and what changes or new goals and activities it might set for the coming year.

Necessary to the end-of-the-year evaluation process is the start-of-the-year designation of how your team will measure partnership results. Measurements don't have to be scientifically accurate, but should reflect expectations for how the program or effort will work.

Here are some ways that Wisconsin schools indicated in their One-Year Action Plans that they would measure results:

- Student test scores
- Survey results
- Anecdotes, quotes, or stories from participants
- Attendance at events
- Student grades
- Other student measures: rate of daily student attendance, homework completion, discipline referrals, or suspensions/expulsions
- Participant evaluations
- Meeting minutes
- "Report cards" completed by parents
- Number of hours devoted to working on project/goal
- Parent-student-staff suggestion or observation forms
- Newsletter or newspaper articles; other media coverage
- Number of families served (i.e. by school's family center)
- Number of people who volunteered
- Number of books read or hours spent reading
- Amount of funds or materials collected or materials used
- Value of in-kind contributions
- Suggestion box results
- School referendum results
- List of activities completed; other documentation

Here are some general questions your team might revisit by reviewing its Three Year Outline and One-Year Action Plan as it considers how partnership efforts made a difference to students, families, and school staff:

- What major goals were set for family-school-community partnerships?
- What measurable results were indicated for each goal?
- What did the measurable results indicate? Did you reach your goal?
- Did partnership activities support your goals?
- Which practices or activities for each goal "worked?" Why? What could be changed to improve or update those practices for next year?
- Did action team members reflect the diversity of students in your school?
- Did parents have direct access to your action team, partnership coordinator, or others to whom they could express their needs and concerns?
- Was your budget for partnerships adequate, i.e., did it effectively support the goals of your action team?
- How did other school and federal programs and in-kind contributions from families and the community support partnership efforts?
- Were time and resources allocated for your team or partnership coordinator to connect with partnership efforts beyond your school or district, such as the Wisconsin/National Network of Partnership Schools or DPI partnership workshops?
- What anecdotes of successful partnerships, relationships or learning can Action Team members share?
- What suggestions for continuing and upscaling partnerships can your Action Team share?
- How can your Action Team celebrate its successes and recognize the contributions of members, volunteers, parents, staff, students, and other participants?



Part 2

Making it Work

Timely Tips for Terrific Team Decisions

Schools That Say Welcome

On Conversing with Parents: *What Are Academic Standards?*

Partnership Coordinator Job Description

Sponsoring a School Parent Forum: Tips for Success

Action Team Review: Taking a Group Time Out

Reaching Out: Steps to Building Partnerships with the Community



Timely Tips for Terrific Team Decisions

Sound decisions stand on two components: quality and commitment.

The quality of a decision reflects the time and effort a group makes to consider relevant facts, underlying issues, the importance of the issue, its timeliness, and other factors.

Commitment to making a good decision and standing by it come when the group understands the decision, supports it, is willing to be involved in it, and is willing to implement the decision.

Both quality and commitment are critical for effective team decision-making. When teams have useful information, some knowledge and involvement, and the authority to make a decision, or, at least, make recommendations about a pending decision, they can produce high-quality, high-commitment decisions.

Team decision-making has many advantages for schools, including:

- allowing diverse perspectives to be heard
- achieving the buy-in and involvement of school families, staff, and students
- arriving at practical steps to reaching accepted goals
- making it easier to make improvements in school climate or student achievement that affect everyone
- laying a solid foundation for future decisions or actions

Team decision-making may NOT work if

- there is not enough time to make a sound decision,
- one or very few people are affected by the decision,
- the team does not have the authority or expertise to make or implement the decision.

The Six-Step Model of Decisionmaking

Here are six steps your Action Team can use to help focus on issues and make better decisions:

1. **Identify the problem or opportunity**
 - What is the effect of the challenge?
 - How is it measured?
 - What is the gap? What happens if nothing is done?
2. **Analyze/understand the problem**
 - Find the “real” problem. Get behind the symptoms
 - Verify the causes with data
 - Validate conclusions with knowledgeable people
3. **Generate potential solutions**
 - Avoid the “I already have the answer!” syndrome
 - Obtain multiple perspectives
 - Use brainstorming or other idea-generating techniques
4. **Select a solution**
 - Develop a set of decision-making criteria that includes costs, resources, skills, time, etc. Validate the proposed solution. Will it really work?
 - Develop your action plan. Use your One-Year Action Plan form.
5. **Implement the solution**
 - Execute your action plan
 - Track progress.
6. **Evaluate the solution**
 - Determine the effectiveness of the solution. What worked well? What could be improved for next year?
 - Revisit the problem if the desired results are not being achieved.

Myths and Realities of Team Decisionmaking

The decisionmaking process is enhanced by creativity. Is your team bogged down by the following myths about creativity or is it invigorated by the realities, as shown below?

Myths About Creativity	The Realities of Creativity
The best ideas come from the most creative individuals	Usually the best ideas come from building on the ideas of others, i.e., from discussion
Only some people are creative	Everyone can be creative
Ideas seem to come from creative people without effort	It takes work and practice to be creative
Only experts are creative	Everyone is an expert in some area
Real creativity means complexity	Sometimes the best ideas are the simplest ones
Creativity means developing something new	A variation in an existing practice can be very creative

Timely Tips for Terrific Team Decisions (*continued*)

Tools for Teams

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a great way to cultivate an atmosphere that encourages open and creative thinking among team members. The most workable ideas are seldom the result of one person's contributions. Brainstorming promotes idea-building, as people add their thoughts to those already presented. A recommended process for brainstorming is:

- Encourage ideas from everyone.
- Repeat and record all ideas.
- Review the list occasionally to prompt more responses.
- Reinforce the quantity of ideas—don't evaluate the quality.
- Rank the final list by having each person choose their top three to five ideas with a checkmark on the flip chart.
- Select the top three vote-getters as the choices your team will pursue.

Build Team Consensus

Once ideas have been generated, use consensus-building to analyze them. Avoid the common tendency of rushing to vote. Take time to deliberate and list the "pro's and con's" of each idea on a flipchart so everyone understands the strengths and weaknesses of each idea.

Action Plan

Once your main ideas, goals, or activities have been generated, use the **One-Year Action Plan** form on page 48 or use the **Action Plan for Strengthening Partnerships** on page 49 to firm up details about who will be responsible for carrying out various facets of the plan by an agreed-upon date. Refer to your One-Year Action Plan at least once a month to measure progress toward your goals or to make needed changes to the plan.



Schools That Say, “Welcome!”

Think about the first time you stepped into a school as an adult. Was it a cheerful place that you felt comfortable visiting? Did you know how to locate the school office? Did staff greet you in a friendly way? As you left the building, did you look forward to your next visit?

What messages do your staff and your school environment send to visitors? Intentionally or not, the first impressions visitors have about your school may be lasting impressions. For some family and community

members, a first, negative visit may be their last visit to your school.

Following, are some ideas your Action Team might use to consider the types of experiences families have working with your school and the relationships that are established.

Evaluate how well your school does by using this scale: 4 = Always 3 = Almost Always
2 = Sometimes 1 = Needs much improvement

- _____ Our school or district has a policy welcoming visitors to the school building.
- _____ Visitors are invited to check in at the school office in a positive way.
- _____ Our school building is clean and the grounds are neat.
- _____ A welcome sign and easy-to-read directions or a school map are displayed near the school entrance.
- _____ Works of student creativity and achievement are displayed prominently and proudly throughout the school.
- _____ Upcoming school events, school rules, bus and lunch schedules, and other information is displayed near the front entrance or other easily accessible area.
- _____ The school has a family center or other area where visitors can meet and easily find information about the school and its curriculum, parenting, and ways to help children learn at home.
- _____ An orientation program is offered for families new to the school.
- _____ Parents are invited to attend school with their children on the first day of the school year or shortly after school starts.
- _____ The school offers frequent opportunities during the school year for families and community members to visit.
- _____ The principal makes time to meet with families as the opportunity and need arises.
- _____ A suggestion box is centrally located so staff, students, and families can contribute ideas and feedback.
- _____ Parents are invited to visit classrooms during the school day.
- _____ Parents know how and when to reach teachers during the school day to talk about concerns and answer questions.

- _____ Parents are invited to visit classrooms during the school day.
- _____ Community members are invited to use the school building and school resources (i.e., computer lab, library).
- _____ The process for requesting use of the building is clear and well-publicized.
- _____ Office staff receive training on ways to be helpful to and considerate of all families, including appropriately answering questions and directing calls.
- _____ Office staff greet visitors in a friendly, courteous way.
- _____ Teachers, staff, and students answer the telephone in a friendly, professional manner.
- _____ The reception area in your school office has a place for waiting parents and other visitors to sit.
- _____ Teachers have access to telephones and e-mail in their classrooms.
- _____ Students are encouraged and praised by office staff and others.
- _____ The school has a PTA or other parent-teacher group.
- _____ The school offers numerous, well-publicized opportunities for family and community members to volunteer.
- _____ Families are provided with the help they need to choose appropriate educational programs for children.
- _____ Translation or other assistance is available to help non-English speaking families learn about the school and participate in activities.
- _____ The school regularly surveys parents and asks parents to serve on the buildings and grounds committee and other school committees.
- _____ Local business and civic groups offer learning and enrichment opportunities to students and families.

On Conversing with Parents

“What Are Academic Standards?”

Parents are as confused about education “standards” as everyone else. In Wisconsin, standards have been issued by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, some school districts, and education-related organizations. There is also talk of “national education standards.”

It’s hard to be against “standards”; for most people, the word itself indicates attainment and a certain level of excellence. But the fact is, most parents have little idea of how certain standards influence classroom practice and what they can do to help their children attain these elusive standards.

Parents and families have, in general, been left out of the formulation of standards. The language of standards—rubrics, proficiency, assessment—is not particularly parent-friendly and distances many parents from participation in the ongoing standards dialogue and debate. In addition, few if any, parents and community members have been genuinely involved in the formation of education standards, which, according to news accounts, will transform the very nature of learning.

If the standards movement is as important as so many say it is, then it is particularly important to include parents. This can be accomplished in a number of ways. For example:

- By having student-led conferences, so they can show their parents how they have achieved certain standards
- By including parents on the school’s or district’s standards committee in numbers roughly equal to teachers and with parents who represent the background and circumstances of all children in the school.
- By developing grade-level brochures for parents that spell out learning expectations for each subject in school; alert parents to upcoming test dates, field trips, and learning requirements in which their children will be expected to participate; and offer developmental insights for children by age.
- By surveying parents about their level of understanding of standards, how their children are assessed, the curriculum, classroom expectations, and what types of things parents do at home to enrich children’s learning.
- By sponsoring a parent forum, workshop, “breakfast with the principal,” or other opportunities for parents to learn about standards, have their questions answered, and give comments and ideas about the standards and how children are assessed. A summary of such meetings can be printed in the school newsletter and the same

events can be broadcast over local cable channels for parents who could not attend the actual event.

Four basic questions quickly emerge when parents meet to learn about and discuss education standards:

1. What is my child supposed to be learning in school, i.e. in third grade or in sixth-grade math?
2. How can I help my child meet this standard?
3. How do I know if my child is meeting the standard?
4. How do I know if these standards are the best ones for my child?

The Parent Forum

Following, are some ideas schools can use to hold a parent conversation or forum about the standards.

Begin your Parent Forum by welcoming everyone and inviting them to have some refreshments. It’s a good idea to have school staff members present who are knowledgeable about the origin and design of the standards.

Distribute nametags and/or ask everyone to introduce themselves. If possible, distribute paper for parents to write on, and ask them to jot down what comes to mind when they hear the term, “education standards.”

After reviewing responses, distribute several copies of the standards that students in your district must meet. Most districts will distribute a copy of the Wisconsin Academic Standards.

Go through an overview of the standards, answering questions parents will likely have, including:

- What are the standards? Who are they written for—students, teachers, or parents?
- How were the standards developed? By whom?
- How will the school know if a child has met the standards?
- How will this be communicated to parents? Will the information for parents be published in languages other than English?
- What will happen if a child does not meet the standards?
- How do teachers learn about and teach the standards?
- How can parents and teachers work together to help students meet the standards?

Give participants about 20 minutes to review the standards information and ask questions.



On Conversing with Parents “What Are Academic Standards?” (*continued*)

If time allows or if other sessions are planned, parents can be invited to break into small groups and generate a list of their concerns about the standards and their child’s learning. For topics at follow-up sessions, you may want to consider these ideas:

- What do parents want to learn more about concerning the standards?
- How are standards set?
- How do the standards influence what teachers teach?
- How can students with different learning styles and needs meet the standards?
- What do parents need from the schools to help them help their children?

- How do the standards and assessment affect a child’s future, including plans for future education and work goals?
- What are other districts/states/countries doing?
- What are your dreams for your children? How can the school help your child achieve that dream? How do school or classroom goals fit into parents’ dreams?

Portions of this article are excerpted from the book, *More Than Bake Sales: The Resource Guide for Family Involvement in Education*, by James Vopat, Stenhouse Publishers, York, ME 1998 and reprinted with permission. Vopat is director of the Milwaukee Writing Project and teaches writing and literature at Carroll College, Waukesha.

Job Description for Family-School-Community Partnerships Coordinator

One of the most effective ways to implement comprehensive family-school-community partnerships in your district or school building is to establish a position for Family-School-Community Partnerships Coordinator, then hire an energetic, positive, persuasive individual to fill the slot. Research has shown that schools with the most effective partnerships have one person accountable for carrying out, communicating, and conducting plans and activities that connect all families to their children's learning.

Whether you name the position a "Parent Liaison," "Parent Involvement Coordinator," or even, for those schools who locate the position's work space in the School Family Center, the "Family Center Coordinator," this person must be able and willing to

- meet regularly with families and community members;
- measure their interests and needs; and
- communicate those interests to school administrators, teachers, and other school staff.

Your school or district will probably want to join the Wisconsin/National Network of Partnership Schools to connect her or his plans and efforts to the research-based strategies of the larger groups and to link the coordinator with peers at the state and national levels.

Who

If possible, a parent or community member committed to making partnerships happen.

Time Commitment

At least four hours a week during the school year.*

Duties

- To act as a point of communication and coordination of those activities, plans, and events with all families and sectors of the school community, making a special effort to involve families who may be waiting to be reached.
- To conduct family-community-school partnership activities in your school or district, including special events, projects, or plans that involve families, school staff, and community members.
- To work with the School Partnership Action Team as staff person or coordinator.
- To serve as a liaison with the DPI Family-School-Community Partnerships Team.
- To act as a contact for activities involving the National Network of Partnership Schools.
- To solicit input and feedback from families and community members about their interests concerning partnerships, such as engaging in parent-teacher action research.
- To work closely with the school principal or other administrator and teachers to arrange activities.
- To keep a record of how moneys were spent and submit a final accounting to the district business office.
- To complete the Update information requested by the National Partnership Schools Network (send copy to the DPI).

* The time commitment depends upon the needs and resources of the school or district, however, a baseline stipend for a coordinator who works four hours a week during the school year might be \$2,500.



Sponsoring a School Parent Forum

Tips for Success

Many schools and districts have found a school-sponsored parent forum to be an effective way to address education-related questions large or small. The benefits are many and extend to schools *and* parents.

Schools can use a Parent Forum to improve communications, decisionmaking, and relationships with parents. By making the effort to call together the parents of the children they serve, listen to parents' comments and ideas, and incorporate parents' suggestions into school plans or programs, schools are sending parents the message that they are important and are partners in student learning.

The word, "forum," connotes open discussion. No matter what school-related issue will be addressed, by sponsoring a forum, your school is making the commitment to listen to all views expressed, then make decisions or take actions based on views expressed or consensus reached. If your school cannot make this commitment, it should not plan not to have a forum. For example, if an issue has already been decided and the primary intent of the gathering is to present information, then it is a *meeting* or a *question-and-answer session*, not a forum.

Here are some questions your school should answer in sponsoring a forum:

What is the purpose of the forum, i.e., what do we want to accomplish?

- The goals of the forum must be clearly stated in all communications. For example, is this a listening session, or do sponsors hope to have an "action plan" laid out by the close of the forum?

What are some examples of issues discussed at school parent forums in Wisconsin?

- How should the district spend funds?
- How do district budget cuts/revenue caps affect our children and schools?
- How do the Wisconsin Academic Standards affect my child's learning?
- What is the Wisconsin Student Assessment System?
- What is our school doing well and how can we improve?
- Is our community and school district meeting the needs of families with young children?
- What kinds of programs should our school offer for students, families, and the community?

- How can we help all students read well?
- What do you need to feel confident in your role as a parent, and how can we support you?
- How can we support teens in the community?
- How can we build positive relationships among youth and adults in our community?
- How can all segments of our community work together for children?
- How can our school better communicate with parents?
- How can we help students become better citizens?

Who is sponsoring the forum?

- Is it the school board, school administration, School Partnership Action Team, PTA or PTO, or a combination of all? Does everyone have ownership and interest in the issue to be discussed?

What are the costs and how will they be paid for?

- Be sure to consider the cost of printing and mailing out notices and/or results, printing materials to be distributed at the forum, refreshments planned for the forum, or speaker/facilitator costs.

When and where will it be held?

- Is the location accessible to everyone?
- Can it accommodate a large group or a breakdown of the large group into smaller discussion tables?
- Who is communicating the needs for room set-up to appropriate parties?

How can we make sure everyone knows about the forum and feels welcome to attend?

- Is the forum being publicized in places throughout the community where families gather: churches, fast food restaurants, grocery stores, the family resource center?
- Are parent leaders from all ethnic groups recruiting participants?

How can we insure that all families and their viewpoints are represented at the forum?

- Does everyone feel welcome to attend and to participate in the forum?
- What language or culture barriers do we need to consider?

Sponsoring a School Parent Forum (*continued*)

Do we want to use a facilitated process to come to a consensus on an issue, vote on the issue, or develop several recommendations about the issue?

- At some point, be sure each person feels welcome to state their viewpoint
- Some forums begin by reviewing a few principles emphasizing respectful listening and speaking objectively.
- Will the large group take a vote on the issue, or will small, table-sized groups have the opportunity to discuss the issue, make recommendations, then vote at large on those recommendations?

How can we consider the views of parents not able to attend the forum?

- Will we consider staging the forum at two different times or in two different places so more parents are able to attend?
- Will the proceedings and results of the forum be published in the local newspaper? In the school district newsletter?
- Will parents not able to attend be invited to phone or write in their views? How will such comments be considered?

How will we communicate the results of the forum?

- Will results be printed or presented in languages other than English for non-English speakers?

- Will the forum be broadcast over the local cable channel?
- Reported on in the local newspaper and at the next school board meeting?

What are the next steps? What group or individual will be responsible for carrying out or considering the results or recommendations of the forum?

- Next steps need to be clearly communicated at and following the forum.
- The school or other sponsoring body needs to be accountable for following up on forum recommendations or participants will be disappointed. Assign a person, if possible, to follow through with recommendations.

What other individuals, or decision-making groups or bodies in the school or community need to know about the forum, be involved in setting it up, or know about the results of the forum?

- Will the local media be invited to attend or to help sponsor the forum?
- Will community leaders or representatives be invited to help plan the forum? To contribute to forum expenses?
- How will the local PTA be involved?
- What community resources can we use to conduct the forum or pursue its next steps?



Action Team Review

Taking a Group Time Out

How often do members of the Partnership Action Team—or, for that matter, the policy board, the site council, the Parent Advisory Council, or the PTA board—ask themselves the deceptively simple question: Why does our group exist?

The Atlanta-based Appalachian Child Care Project developed 12 searching questions to help parents and community groups effectively plan their programs. The technical term implied by each question is next to it in parenthesis.

1. Why does our group exist? (*Goals*)
2. What does our group want? (*Objectives*)
3. What can our group do to make it happen? (*Resources*)
4. How do we do it? (*Strategy*)
5. Exactly how do we do it? (*Task analysis*)
6. Who will do it? (*Responsibility*)
7. Where will we do it? (*Timeline*)
8. Are we (am I) doing it? (*Monitoring*)
9. How do we (I) feel about it? (*Self-assessment*)
10. Did we really do it? (*Evaluation*)
11. So what? (*Conclusion*)
12. Now what? (*Recommendations*)

Reaching consensus about why one's group exists is essential to clarifying purpose, energizing membership, strengthening the commitment to work as a team, and achieving common goals.

Here's an idea for jump-starting a good group discussion at your next meeting: give each member of your group a piece of paper and ask them to jot down a brief answer to the question, "Why does our group exist?"

Give members two minutes to write their answers. Then collect all of the papers, mix them up, redistribute them, and ask each member to read aloud what is written on the piece of paper he or she is holding. Wait until everyone has had a chance to read an answer, then be prepared for an interesting exchange of views.

- Are there similarities among the answers? Differences?
- How do members' perceptions reflect or differ from the group's "official" mission it may have started with?
- Can your group arrive at a common answer that everyone agrees on?

Take time during several meetings to answer the other questions most important to your team. Summarize and hand out copies of answers so members have them on hand during every meeting. Revisit your agreed-upon answers at the start of each meeting, especially if new members join or an audience is present at your team meeting.

Use the 12 questions to develop agendas, formulate an action plan, and make recommendations for action. Don't hesitate to ask for assistance from school staff or community members who can advance the sense of teamwork and the accomplishments of your team. And be sure to share the results of your team time-out with the families, school staff, and administrators in your school or district, increasing awareness of your team's mission and keeping open the flow of ideas, comments, and connections.

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Reaching Out

Steps to Building Partnerships with the Community

Community representatives—business, civic groups, and senior citizens—have an important role to play in the effectiveness of school action teams. Groups and citizens active in the community can bring a vast array of resources, talents, and perspectives to partnerships and enrich opportunities for students to learn.

Following, are some steps action teams can take to ensure that community members feel welcome to contribute to family-school-community partnerships.

Work Together

When planning and implementing partnerships, consult a wide variety of community groups and citizens. Involving them from the start lets community members buy in and feel a sense of ownership in partnerships by determining their own needs, choosing the educational issues that affect them, and recognizing their capacity to help.

Assess Needs

Have the action team address a community-friendly checklist with questions, such as:

- What barriers exist to children's learning in our community? How can they be overcome?
- What are we currently doing to implement high standards in every classroom in our community?
- What are we doing to help children who need extra assistance?
- What steps need to be taken so that children in our community read well by the end of grade three, succeed in math by the end of grade eight, think about and prepare for education and work after high school, and benefit from after-school and summer enrichment programs?
- What can we do to strengthen high schools and help more teenagers get, and stay, on the right track?

Identify Networks

Think about the different perspectives and interests in your community. What cultures, languages, faith groups, ages, business sectors, education institutions, and cultural organizations are represented? Identify communications links and networks, so your action team understands how information travels and how people become connected in your community. For example, one network may be a person who occupies several positions in your community, i.e., a business leader who is also a member of a faith community.

Survey Resources

Examine how people in your community would be willing to help. Talk to schools about their volunteer opportunities and needs. Speak with community leaders about providing time off for employees to improve schools, and to senior citizen groups, colleges, and universities about tutoring and mentoring. Contact local arts organizations and museums about providing cultural activities for children both inside and outside the schools.

Share Information

Ask community representatives from national organizations and associations about available activities and resources for local members to use in planning and building partnerships. Share this information with teachers, parents, and principals.

Seek Out Experienced Collaborators

Are there people in your community or state who are experienced in building coalitions? Ask them to give a presentation on building partnerships. Provide action team members with examples of successful partnerships.



Part 3

Wisconsin Partnership Stories

Building a Productive Action Team

Children's Dresser

Salute to the Arts: Family Learning Night

Family Survey

Sample

Get to Know You Conferences

Transition to Middle School Activities

Family Center Learning Nights

Bring-Your-Grandparent or Special Friend-to-School Day

Potluck PTO Meetings

Building a Productive Action Team

Tiffany Creek Elementary School, Boyceville School District

Following, are a few tips for those seeking to create productive, responsive family-school-community partnership action teams.

- Feed the members well.
- Laugh a lot.
- Use meeting time to accomplish work.

There's a bit more to it, but the shared decision-making team that has existed for the past eight years at Tiffany Creek Elementary in Boyceville, a rural school in a district of about 1,000 students, has initiated changes to strengthen family-school-community partnerships, including:

- A four-year-old preschool,
- An increase in the school nurse position from 50 percent to 70 percent,
- Community education efforts, including before and after-school programming,
- Installation of phones in all classrooms,
- Room parents for each classroom,
- Student-led parent-teacher conferences,
- Grade-level brochures for parents of student learning expectations, and
- Grade-level homework expectations for families.

It really comes down to how decisions are made. This group is responsible for initiating broad partnership goals. We don't tell teachers what to do in the classroom day-to-day. We try to balance what it is we want to do as a school with what the community's perceptions and needs are of our school. And we are constantly evaluating what's working and what's not working.

The shared decisionmaking team, composed of parents and teachers from primary, intermediate, and upper elementary grade level clusters, the principal, and several other staff representatives, meets once a month during the school year for about three hours each time.

We devote several initial meetings to thoroughly discussing and completing the *Checklist of the Six Types of Partnerships: An Inventory for Schools*, and then identifies four partnership goals to address during the

school year: two academic goals, one non-academic goal, and one partnership goal.

Effective schools are about so much more than just good test scores. They are also about making parents feel welcome and a part of things. For example, one year we launched our goal to improve communication with parents by enlisting the help of sixth graders to survey parents at the school open house in September. Surveys were completed during the open house and returned from 98 percent of the school's families.

As a result of the survey, the school installed classroom phones, funded by federal TEACH monies, and asked teachers to devise a plan of their choice to send positive notes home or make positive phone calls to parents during the year.

Another project completed by the team, after much discussion by parents and teachers, was the creation of a grid of homework expectations for each grade level. Families can attach the grid to their refrigerators for easy reference throughout the year. The grid includes average time expectations, types of homework activity, and teachers' phone numbers.

The team is also intent on responding to the needs of teachers. For instance, a survey of teachers revealed that they could really use help with the day-to-day details of volunteering, field trips, and classroom celebrations that take up so much time. Consequently, a teacher on maternity leave and a parent were commissioned to work out policy and practice for what a room parent program would look like.

Some of our team's success is due to the benefits of living in a small, rural community. As one parent remarked, "Parents are going to be involved in their children's education because school is the only game in town."

I believe that a productive, responsive action team comes as the result of building open, trusting relationships. Team members find themselves compromising on some goals, but no one is afraid to speak their mind.

For more information, contact Del Boley, Tiffany Creek Elementary Principal, at 715-643-4331 or by email at delb@boyceville.k12.wi.us.

Children's Dresser

Northland Pines Elementary-St. Germain, Northland Pines School District

Our *Children's Dresser* is in our School Family Resource Center. It is a brightly covered four-drawer dresser with an attached hanging closet. In the drawers are donated school-size pants, shirts, sweatshirts and uniforms (soccer, baseball, brownies, scouts, etc.) for any child who needs them.

Many fall mornings, the dew on the playground equipment causes the first one down the slide to get a wet seat. Not only is that embarrassing to the child, but sitting in wet clothes is unhealthy and distracts from learning.

Since we live in snow boots for six months out of the year, children often had wet socks all day. Some children had cracked and peeling feet for months! In the past, the school secretary had to call the parent and ask them to bring dry clothes. This was often a problem for parents, since we live in a rural area with long distances between home and school and many parents work outside the home.

The *Children's Dresser* enables children to help themselves to the clothes in the dresser, change, and get to class in a few minutes.

This program has evolved with families' needs, originating eight years ago as a project of the Women's Service Club in our community. The Service Club accepted donations of everything and anything, using a room in our community center. Every Saturday morning, volunteers opened the room for community members to drop off or pick up clothes as needed. This group extended its generosity to adult clothes also.

After about two years, they asked the newly-formed Child Quest Preschool Group to take the program over. Child Quest ran it for four years in the community center, which was at the time attached to the St. Germain School. Child Quest gave it the name, *Children's Dresser*, featuring clothing and items for children from birth to fifth-grade sizes. It was very successful and very busy.

Our new St. Germain School was built five years ago, situated in a building separate from the community

center. The school purchased a dresser for the *Children's Dresser* in our new school, which is still fulfilling a need for children and families. Besides recycling locally, the *Children's Dresser* has helped numerous families who had lost their home to fires, as well as families relocating from floods in North Dakota with only the clothes on their backs.

We make sure that the Dresser includes our students' largest and smallest sizes in both girls' and boys' clothes. We only accept specific items and are especially partial to the school shirts that children have outgrown and pass on to show school spirit! Packer items remain the most popular "experienced" clothes in our collection.

The local Women's Service Club has donated new socks and underwear to keep on hand; we do not accept used ones. The Women's Service Club also has volunteers who knit and crochet mittens, gloves and ski caps for our little snow angels, and we accept as many mittens, hats and gloves that we can get.

If a child has to change clothes, we put the wet clothes in a plastic bag accompanied by a note from the teacher or principal explaining why the child is coming home in different clothing. We also note that the clothes were donated and do not need to be returned.

This is a very effective program with little or no cost. Once set up and running, it takes minimal effort if everyone at school helps share the responsibility. It's been our experience that everyone feels a part of it, so everyone has taken care of it, including the Brownies, who meet in that room!

We believe that this practice has increased the sense of community in our school and has helped our kids remain in school with fewer distractions from learning. It's a great way to recycle children's clothing, and all families can be involved in giving or receiving the clothes. This is an act of giving that just keeps on giving!

This article was submitted by Patty Schoppe, former school parent coordinator. For more information, contact, Northland Pines Elementary— St. Germain, at 715-542-3632.

Salute to the Arts: Family Learning Night

Lincoln Elementary School, Whitewater School District

Lincoln Elementary School has many effective partnership practices that really work, including hosting a variety of family learning nights. The theme for one of our family learning nights is "Salute to The Arts." This event is organized through Lincoln's Volunteer Program, which is sponsored by Whitewater Community Education, a district-wide program.

The goal of our Volunteer Program is to engage parents and other community

members in meaningful ways that support and enhance student learning. Understanding that everyone cannot be involved in the schools during the school day, we look for opportunities to involve parents and other community members at varying times.

For our *Salute to The Arts* family learning night, volunteers whose vocation or avocation is in the field of art or music are recruited as presenters for a series of demonstrations related to the arts. This event is held on a Friday night. Students and their parents are invited to visit as many presentations as they wish during the evening. Dinner is offered in the cafeteria.

Students act as waiters, guides, and greeters during the night. They had decorated the walls with original artwork depicting artists and musicians whom they had studied in art and music classes. For that night, the cafeteria is renamed, *The Artists' Café*.

Examples of presentations during the evening include:

- **Band conductor**—How to conduct a band. A hands on demonstration for parents and their children on how to use a conductor's baton.
- **Fabric designer**—How to weave on a loom. A weaving demonstration.
- **Actor**—Play a character in an excerpt from a theatre production under the direction of a production company owner/actor.

- **Water color artist**—Learn painting technique from a local artist. Paint your own watercolor.
- **Graphic artist**—Explore how a design idea becomes a final advertising promotion.
- **Rock band**—How five musicians came together as a rock band. Learn about the criteria for selecting band members. Listen for the musical sounds of each instrument in their completed CD.

The presenters are parents, aunts, cousins, and grandparents of students in the school. Other presenters have included a retired teacher, a local businessperson, and students at the nearby University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

About 200 people attend our Salute to the Arts Night. Next year, we plan to have volunteer students from UW-Whitewater's theatre classes walk the halls dressed in character as various historically known artists.

Expenses for this event are kept to a minimum. Fliers advertising the event are done on a school computer, duplicated at school, and sent home with students. We also provide a program for the evening that includes the evening's schedule and a brief biography of each presenter. A food service employee prepares a hot dog dinner for which families pay a small charge.

The overall benefit of these evenings is many-faceted. Families feel more comfortable and welcome at school when a variety of opportunities for participation are available. Student achievement is enhanced through creative learning. Family learning night events could easily be replicated in other schools, and not just at the elementary school level.

This article was submitted by Kris Coan, Volunteer Services Coordinator. For more information, contact Lincoln Elementary at 262-472-8500.

Family Survey

Lake Superior Elementary, Superior School District

Embedded in the school improvement plan for Lake Superior Elementary School is the goal of assessing the school's strengths and needs in the area of parent involvement. An important step toward achieving that goal was the development of a survey for school families.

We received a very good response to the survey, developed by an Action Team of four parents, three teachers, and six other staff members and are pleased to share it. Of the 203 families in our school, 109 returned their surveys. It succeeded beyond our hopes in generating many interesting and challenging ideas that connect children's learning to the community they live in.

In developing the survey, we wanted families to know that we really cared about their concerns and needs. Consequently, many of the questions families were asked to respond to were open-ended and designed to solicit their ideas. We aimed, not for a survey that told people what they needed, but that *asked* them what they *wanted*.

We wanted families to look beyond what they traditionally thought of as school activities to contribute to a new picture of what school could do for them. We wrote the survey very carefully, keeping in mind that many parents, themselves, are challenged by reading and writing. After composing the survey using school computers, we used DPI Family-School-Community Partnership Grant seed money to have it professionally printed.

Parents received the survey in mid-February along with the information telling them what time their late

February parent-teacher conference was scheduled. We asked them to complete the survey and give it to their child's teacher at the parent-teacher conference. We printed the survey results less than three weeks later in the school newsletter to make sure parents felt that their ideas and concerns were not forgotten.

Three needs immediately became apparent in survey results.

1. Families needed help with transportation to school or city events.
2. Families wanted medical services available at school.
3. Parents wanted the school to provide opportunities for their child to have a tutor. A significant number of respondents also indicated that the school should provide tutors for adults.

Happily, 70 families also indicated that they would like to participate in an open discussion or forum on school-family activities. We hope to conduct such a meeting in September, focusing on the three areas listed above, as well as entertaining parents' and school staff members' ideas for and questions about how these ambitious goals might be accomplished. Members of our business community will be invited to participate in the discussion.

The survey was a good first step forward in addressing the real issues that families, children, and children's learning face. We also feel that the family-friendly way in which the survey was developed, written, and gathered played a large role in its success.

Following, is a sample of the survey we developed.

Family Survey (Sample)

Lake Superior Elementary

We would like to create a new picture of what school can do for you. Please help us!

Research has shown that children do better in school when the people who are responsible for their care are involved in their education.

At Lake Superior Elementary, we believe we can strengthen the tie between our community and school, but only with your advice and support. Please fill out this survey to let us know what kind of services you need.

Let us know about all of your ideas. There are no wrong answers.

.....

What services can we offer beyond the normal things you see at school? *(For example, transportation to school or community events)*

Are there any school programs that you would like to see offered?

Are you aware of the services that your school already offers? Yes___ No___

Would you like medical services provided for your child at the school? Yes___ No___

Would you take advantage of tutoring for your child at the school? Yes___ No___

Would you be willing to participate in an open discussion regarding community/school activities? Yes___ No___

Would you be interested in attending or participating in an open discussion regarding school/community activities? Yes___ No___

Would you be interested in attending or participating in any of the following?

- ☐ teach your favorite hobby to children or adults
- ☐ assist another teaching adult
- ☐ participate with my child

Would you be willing to volunteer:

- ☐ in a classroom
- ☐ in the library
- ☐ to read with children
- ☐ to prepare materials
- ☐ other _____
- ☐ other _____

When would be an ideal time for you to be active with these programs?

- ☐ the weekend
- ☐ after school during the week (3-5 p.m.)
- ☐ evenings after school (5-7 p.m.)
- ☐ other _____

For more information, contact Lynn Nusbaum, teacher, at Lake Superior Elementary, School District of Superior, 715-398-7672.



Learning Together

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction • Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent • 125 South Webster Street • P.O. Box 7841 • Madison, WI 53707-7841 • 800-441-4563

“Get to Know You” Conferences

Webster-Stanley Elementary School, Oshkosh School District

Students, parents, and teachers in our school have the chance to establish positive relationships early in the school year to help the rest of the year go more smoothly. “Get to Know You” conferences accomplish exactly what their name implies: they give parents the chance to get to know the child’s teacher, and they give teachers a chance to know the child they will teach for the next nine months.

The conferences are held several evenings, as well as during and after school, during the second and third weeks of school. Families choose a time convenient for them and students are invited to attend. We started the conferences with incoming kindergartners and their parents several years ago and go up one grade each year. In the 2001-02 school year, conferences will be held for kindergarten through grade four.

Although some schools hold “Get to Know You” conferences before school starts, we usually have about 15 to 20 new students who walk into our school for the first time after Labor Day. Our conferences are held a week or two after school starts so we can reach everyone. Each conference is 20 minutes long.

Any siblings that attend with the student and parents are invited to participate in activities in either the school library or in the school computer lab. Two work-study students from the nearby University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh staff our school library during the school year on Tuesday and Thursday nights when it is open to the community. Other UW-O students with education or technology backgrounds volunteer to staff the school computer lab.

We use a combination of SAGE (Student Achievement Guarantee in Education) and district funds to compensate teachers for their extra time and to hire substitute teachers for those who must arrange the conferences during the school day to accommodate parents who are second or third shift workers. If we are unable to connect with a family during these set-aside times, we also make home visits or on occasion have met with the parent during their lunch hour at work.

Before the conference, we send home school-parent handbooks and a letter from the child’s teacher inviting

the parent to sign up for a conference time and suggested discussion topics. For example, parents are asked about their goals for and concerns about their child. Rather than progress down a formal list, however, we have found that most parents just want to talk. Sometimes they talk about family situations they feel the teacher should know about. Other times, parents talk about their hopes for the child or the social or academic challenges the child faces. But it is really a wonderful chance for the parent to just talk about that child in a relaxed setting.

During the conference, we also ask parents, teachers, and students to each develop a general goal for the year and to sign the student-parent-teacher compact. Parents are also introduced to any support staff who may be working with their child such as the Title I reading teacher, Reading Recovery teacher or the speech and language clinician.

Teachers have found that because an initial relationship with the parent has already been established, discussions during November parent-teacher conferences are much more focused on the student’s academic progress. Attendance at our school’s November conferences has always been very good, but holding the “Get to Know You” conferences has especially increased parent-teacher conference attendance among parents who might have struggled themselves in school or who might be intimidated by the school setting.

Parents also seem more willing to contact teachers outside of the conference setting with questions, or to resolve problems early on in the school year instead of hoping they will “go away” or solve themselves.

“Get to Know You” conferences have been a very positive, rewarding way of establishing productive parent-teacher partnerships that continue to grow all year long. We hope to continue them and grow with them!

For more information, contact Patti Vickman, principal, at 920-424-0460 or by email at patvic@oshkosh.k12.wi.us. Heather Martin, former VISTA volunteer at Webster-Stanley, also contributed to this article.

Transition to Middle School Activities For Students and Families

Altoona Middle School, Altoona School District

The Altoona Middle School Partnership Committee has taken several steps to facilitate the transition of students and families to middle school.

The Partnership Committee is a school improvement action team that meets monthly. Members include one staff member and one parent representing each grade level and special education; the principal; the community liaison; and a chairperson. The Partnership Committee builds and strengthens partnerships between home, school and community. Much of its work centers on facilitating communication, and addressing issues brought by parents and staff members. Altoona Middle School has approximately 425 students in grades five through eight.

The committee began its work on the transition to middle school by holding several meetings at which parents presented their concerns, as well as their ideas for dealing with difficulties their children had experienced. Staff members from fourth and fifth grade then met to look at parent input and discuss ways they could help students transition. The Partnership Committee also discussed additional activities that could be implemented. Finally, representatives from staff, guidance department, and Partnership Committee met to create an action plan.

Students had originally prepared for middle school with:

- a letter exchange between fourth- and fifth-grade students.
- a panel discussion at which fourth graders received information from staff and students about middle school and fifth grade.
- a parent meeting in the spring with the principal, guidance counselor and dean of students.

Additional activities were also initiated to address parents' concerns, including a day in the spring for fourth-grade students to walk through the fifth-grade classrooms and meet teachers. The week before school starts, parents and students are also encouraged to visit the middle school to receive their class schedules and try their locker combination.

The day before school starts, a Back to School Night is held for fifth graders and their parents or guardians. Students and parents are able to walk through their daily schedule, meet the teachers, talk about the year ahead, try their locker combination, have refreshments, and take home an AMS water bottle!

Other transition-friendly measures developed by the team include:

- development of a *Tip Sheet for Success in 5th Grade*, from ideas presented by parents and staff members, distributed to all students and families;
- surveying fifth-grade parents about their child's transition experiences, conducted at fall conferences;
- implementing a Project Hotline; and
- adding parents to the panel for the spring parent meeting.

The response from parents, staff and students has been very positive. The Partnership Committee effectively facilitated the process of listening, creating action steps, ensuring they were carried out, and evaluating the results.

This article was submitted by Ann Kaiser, school-community liaison. For more information, contact Altoona Middle School at 715-839-6030.

Family Center Learning Nights

Jefferson Elementary School, Stevens Point

Our school Family Center is a place where families learn, especially on Family Center Learning Nights, held weekly during the school year. All families of students in our school were invited to attend weekly learning events, each designed to reinforce academic skills, keep parents informed about school goals, or strengthen family bonds. Another important goal of the Learning Nights is to invite families into the school, help them become comfortable in the school, and form positive relationships with school staff.

Our VISTA volunteer, Title 1 staff, the school librarian, and reading specialists worked together to offer a series of learning opportunities for families. The VISTA volunteer and Title 1 staff alternately facilitated learning nights. Most were held in the school family learning center, located in the school library, and a few were held elsewhere in the school building, depending upon space needs.

About 72 percent of students at Jefferson Elementary qualify for free and reduced school lunches, many live in single-parent families, and 45 percent of students are Hmong. While all families were invited to Family Center Learning Nights, Hmong families were targeted for several specific events, including Family Math Night and Family Science Night. A Hmong translator was present for the targeted events.

We usually held Family Learning Nights from 7 to 8:30 p.m. on Thursdays. Food was often a part of Family Center Learning Nights. While snacks were usually available, simple meals were occasionally offered to participating families. For example, Family Movie Night with popcorn and Family Team Building Night with pizza turned out to be two of the most popular Learning Nights. Local Kwik Trip employees also volunteered to decorate cookies with families one night.

We kicked off Family Center Learning Nights during the School Open House in late September with a Storytelling Night. A local storyteller told stories to families and then acted out parts of the stories with students and their families. The audience participation made that evening particularly enjoyable!

We publicized the Learning Nights primarily in the Family Center newsletter sent home monthly with each student, but also in the school newsletter and on signs posted around the school and in classrooms. The Family Center newsletter included the schedule for upcoming Family Learning Nights and tips for parents to do literacy activities or other learning activities with children at home. The Hmong translator made many phone calls to the families of Hmong students to publicize nights targeted for Hmong families.

Other topics for Family Center Learning Nights included:

- **Family Game Night**—families played board games and simple learning games
- **Make Your Own Book Nights**—families were invited to bring photographs or mementos and make a book about their family
- **How Children Learn to Read Night**—offering families information about the reading process and ideas they could use for family reading
- **Testing and State Standards Night**—explaining to families how this system works and how they could help prepare children
- **Author Nights**—families read or listened to favorite children's stories, including the *Curious George* and *Clifford* series, then participated in related projects and authored their own books.

The school year came to a close before we had time to do a Family Computer Night and several other nights. We had more ideas than time!

Funding for the events came from Title 1 and Goals 2000. The VISTA volunteer was supported by a federal Americorps grant to the school through DPI.

In addition to making families aware of how and what children were learning, the other common element in each Family Center Learning Night was *fun!* We tried to let families have fun together, whether they were doing an activity, sharing a snack, or listening to a story.

This article was submitted by Kristin Cizewski, former VISTA volunteer at Jefferson. For more information, contact Jefferson Elementary School at 715-345-5418.

Bring-Your-Grandparent or Special Friend-to-School Day

Kohler School District

As one way of increasing volunteerism, community involvement, and positive relations with senior citizens in our community, the Kohler School District annually sponsors *Bring-Your-Grandparent or Special Friend-to-School Day* for the 250 students in kindergarten through grade six. The event draws many grandparents and special friends into our school and gives them a chance to see how today's classrooms work. Last year we expected about 75 visitors instead of the 130 who came!

We hold "Grandparents' Day" from 9 to 11 a.m. on a day in March. Grandparents and special friends are invited to a Welcome and brunch in the school library, then attend the regularly-scheduled class with their grandchild. Afternoon kindergarteners hosted 30 visitors from 12:15 to 1:30 p.m. We also make a few special arrangements for grandparents who have two or more grandchildren in school.

Most teachers plan a special activity for grandparents or special friends and students to do together. Some teachers ask children to write a short essay about, "What My Grandparent Means to Me," or to gather information from the grandparent about his or her life. Square dancing has been featured in physical education classes and many grandparents join right in!

After visiting classrooms, everyone tours the school. Lots of grandparents have commented that the two-hour time visiting period is "just right," allowing working grandparents to return to work and retired grandparents to go onto other things for the day.

Grandparent's Day has also succeeded in planting the seeds of interest for prospective volunteers. Many

grandparents have said they were glad to see how learning took place in their grandchild's classroom and have wondered how they could be more involved in their learning. Sign-up sheets are readily-available for local grandparents who care to volunteer in school.

We are fortunate to benefit from the talents of several grandparent volunteers. Some grandparents lead Great Books discussion groups for each grade level once a week during the school day. Others prefer to take something out of our school "volunteer drawer," a drawer in the school office that contains teacher requests for help with things such as making copies or putting up bulletin boards.

Senior volunteers also make great reading teachers and sometimes serve as experts on various topics in the classroom. The children love to work with senior volunteers. Their gentle, relaxed ways of imparting skills make them real treasures.

To make sure that our volunteers—whatever their ages—feel appreciated, we hold a Volunteer Appreciation Program each April. We have found that holding the Volunteer Appreciation Program just before the annual Spring Concert really boosts attendance at both events. Many parents and grandparents who were planning to attend their child's concert came early to be our guests at a quick volunteer luncheon. We are pleased to be able to say, "thank you," to many more volunteers each year!

For more information, contact Susan Jaberg, curriculum director for the Kohler School District, at 920-459-2920, ext. 1300 or by email at jabergs@kohler.k12.wi.us.



Potluck PTO Meetings

Aniwa Elementary School, Antigo School District

Question: *How can a small, rural school boost attendance at parent meetings, keep parents up-to-date on what their children are learning, and get parent input on school goals and initiatives?*

Answer: Hold PTO potlucks.

The Aniwa Elementary School Parent-Teacher Organization holds three to four well-attended potluck dinners each school year for students and their families, discovering that they are valuable vehicles for linking parents to children's learning, as well as to each other. The meetings also help the school realize a district-wide goal of establishing two-way communication with parents, involving more parents in decision-making, and encouraging student learning at home.

When the Antigo School District established a School Effectiveness Team, composed of parents, teachers, administrators, and other school staff, each school was also asked to form its own building-level team. We struggled with the question of how we were going to get parents to come to these meetings, recognizing that most PTO meetings attracted only the PTO officers and a few school staff members.

The thought occurred to us that the meetings we had the greatest attendance at were our occasional school potluck dinners. The whole family was invited to attend and eat together. Then parents participated in a discussion or listened to a presentation while children played under the supervision of volunteers.

Why not incorporate school effectiveness team goals into parent-teacher organization meetings, and invite the whole family to come along? The PTO Potlucks have been a great way to get parents to come to meetings, talk with teachers and other parents in a relaxed setting, and help all parents—especially those new to our school—feel as if they belong. Our school has only 63 students, but experiences an average attendance of 80 at each potluck.

Sixth graders usually help set up the school gym before the meeting (we have no school cafeteria). School staff and families eat together from 6 to 7 p.m. At 7 p.m., children either play outside or in the gym under the supervision of a volunteer who receives a small stipend from the PTO.

Parents either stay in the gym or move to our small school library for the night's program and we wrap up

the meeting no later than 8:30 p.m. Some of the topics we have addressed include:

- Discussing district and school goals, including space needs. Many parents and staff want kindergarteners back in our building instead of at another elementary school.
- Watching a video and discussing ideas for age-appropriate learning activities at home.
- Listening to a presentation by the school counselor on child discipline.
- Sharing the results of the statewide Third Grade Reading Test and discussing what families and teachers could do together to improve student reading and writing—two of our school's goals.

We also like to have a little fun. Each spring, students receive a packet of seeds to plant at home. Some years it's pumpkin seeds, other years, it has been zucchini or sunflower seeds. We kick off the first potluck of the school year by inviting students to bring their produce back to school and show off their gardening efforts. We award prizes for the most creative, biggest, roundest, etc.

We also used one potluck to have students exhibit and demonstrate their science fair projects to parents, a learning experience for everyone.

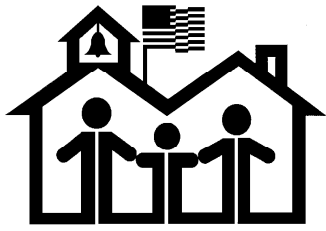
There's always been plenty of food for everyone. The PTO officers usually pick a date and a "food theme" for each meeting. Whether it's spaghetti, barbecue, hot dogs, hamburgers and brats, or scalloped potatoes and ham, everyone brings something and there's usually a nice mix of side dishes and desserts.

The kids are the great promoters of these events. We publicize them in our monthly school newsletters home and in the school calendar, but the children really love to come and make sure their parents know it!

The potlucks have been held at virtually no cost to our school. Occasionally, the PTO contributes funds for a special menu item in addition to the volunteer stipend. A local fast food restaurant has also donated juice at some potlucks.

We plan to continue the potlucks and look forward to sharing food, thoughts, and friendship next year!

For more information contact Mary Dettmering, Aniwa Elementary principal, at 715-449-2931.



Part 4

Helpful Forms

The Six Types of Family-School-Community Partnerships

A Checklist for Schools: Making Your Family-Community Partnership Work

One-Year Action Plan

Action Plan for Strengthening Family-School-Community Partnerships

School Goals and Results of Partnerships

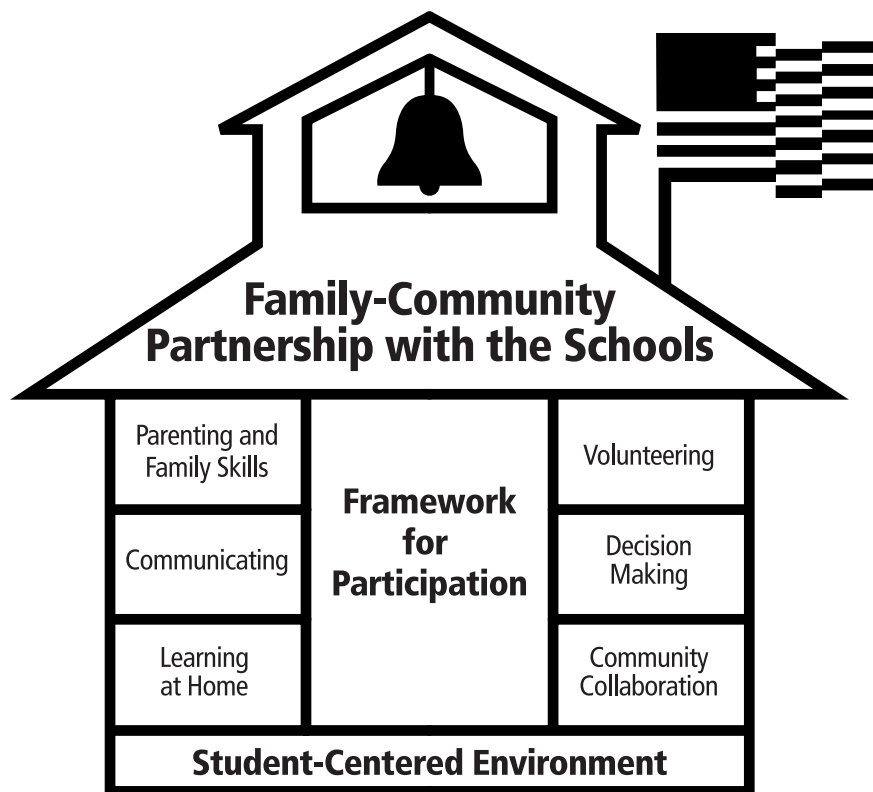
Three-Year Outline

Web Resources on Family-School-Community Partnerships

Wisconsin/National Network Membership Form for Schools

Wisconsin/National Network Membership Form for Districts

The Six Types of Family-School-Community Partnerships



The Six Types

Parenting—Build on parenting strengths and help families improve parenting skills. Facilitate support systems and networks to enable families to effectively nurture their children.

Communicating—Design and implement effective two-way communication practices to reach families, both individually and collectively. These practices should ensure that families and school staff communicate back and forth about their children.

Learning at Home—Provide for families and school staff to work together in developing learning goals and offering opportunities for learning activities at home and in the community to meet the goals.

Volunteering—Recruit and organize volunteer participation from families and the community at-large.

Decision Making—Design governance structure through which parents are partners in policy decisions so that families have opportunities to give their opinions and to participate in decision making about school programs. Recruit families to act as advocates and decision makers and represent other parents and families.

Community Collaboration—Establish partnerships with individuals and organizations in the community.

**Based on the research of Joyce Epstein, co-director, Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning, John Hopkins University. Implementation through the League of Schools Reaching Out, Institute for Responsive Education, Boston.*

Getting it Done

Leadership—Who is in charge and has the authority to organize and assign tasks? One person should be accountable for the results.

Analysis—What are the needs and challenges? What results do you want? Develop a basis for your efforts.

Planning and Policy Development—What must be done? How? Who will do it? What is the time line? School board policy and district and school procedures may need to be developed.

Action/Implementation—With the ground-work laid, how much of the plan can you put in place? While the six types of family-community participation for schools are interrelated and important for a comprehensive approach, determine what is possible and practical at any given time. Don't delay doing something because the whole plan is not in place.

Evaluation—What worked? What didn't? What needs changing or fine tuning? Listen and learn from experiences.

A Checklist for Schools

Making Your Family-Community Partnership Work

Following are examples of practices and programs that schools and districts can use to encourage family and community support of children's learning. They are meant to be advisory and should be adapted to each school's or district's needs.

Parenting and Family Skills

- ☐ 1. We sponsor family learning workshops on topics suggested by parents, and held at times and places easily accessible to all parents.
 - ☐ 2. We ask families what types of workshops or informational events they would be interested in attending and what session times are most convenient for them.
 - ☐ 3. We provide families with information on child development.
 - ☐ 4. We lend families books and tapes on parenting and parent workshops.
 - ☐ 5. We provide families with information about developing home conditions that support school learning.
 - ☐ 6. We survey parents to determine their needs, assign staff members to help address those needs, and work to link parents with community resources.
 - ☐ 7. We have a family center or help parents access other resource centers in the community.
 - ☐ 8. We have support groups for families with special interests and needs.
 - ☐ 9. We train staff members and support them in reaching out to all families.
 - ☐ 10. Other: _____
- ☐ 11. We communicate the school's mission and expectations for students to parents.
 - ☐ 12. The school has a homework hotline or other kind of telephone system.
 - ☐ 13. We provide parents with structured ways to comment on the school's communications, for example, with mailed, phone, or take-home surveys.
 - ☐ 14. We have staff members available to assist and support parents in their interactions with the school (i.e. home-school liaisons).
 - 15. We send home communications about
 - ☐ student academic progress
 - ☐ meetings at school
 - ☐ how parents can be involved in student activities
 - ☐ Parent Association
 - ☐ student discipline
 - ☐ child development
 - ☐ the curriculum
 - ☐ how parents can be involved as volunteers
 - ☐ how parents can be involved in school governance
 - ☐ how parents can help with homework and encourage learning at home
 - ☐ community resources available to families
 - ☐ how parents can communicate with school staff
 - ☐ the school's philosophy of learning.
 - ☐ 16. We directly speak to parents (does not include leaving messages on answering machines) if students are having academic difficulty or causing classroom disruptions **before** a crisis occurs.
 - ☐ 17. We provide copies of school textbooks and publications about the school to the public library.
 - ☐ 18. Other: _____

Communicating

- ☐ 1. We schedule parent-teacher-student conferences to establish student learning goals for the year.
- ☐ 2. We listen to parents tell us about their children's strengths and how they learn.
- ☐ 3. We follow the "Rule of Seven:" offering at least seven different ways that parents and community members can learn about what is happening in the school and comment on it.
- ☐ 4. Teachers have ready access to telephones to communicate with parents during or after the school day.
- ☐ 5. Staff members send home positive messages about students.
- ☐ 6. We make efforts to communicate with fathers.
- ☐ 7. Staff members make home visits.
- ☐ 8. Parents know the telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of school staff members and the times teachers are available to take phone calls from parents.
- ☐ 9. We involve families in student award and recognition events.
- ☐ 10. We encourage and make provisions for staff members to communicate with parents about the child's progress several times each semester.

Learning at Home

- ☐ 1. We have specific goals and activities that keep parents informed about and supportive of their children's homework.
- ☐ 2. We offer learning activities and events for the whole family.
- ☐ 3. We invite parents to borrow resources from school libraries for themselves and their families.
- ☐ 4. We link parents with resources and activities in the community that promote learning.
- ☐ 5. We give parents materials they can use to evaluate their child's progress and provide feedback to teachers.

- ☐ 6. We help parents understand student assessments, including report cards and testing, and how to help students improve.
- ☐ 7. School staff and school communications help parents link home learning activities to learning in the classroom.
- ☐ 8. We include parents and other community members in developing children's learning outside of school activities.
- ☐ 9. Other: _____

Volunteering

- ☐ 1. We encourage families and other community members to volunteer their support by attending school events.
- ☐ 2. We offer youth service learning opportunities for students who want to volunteer in the community.
- ☐ 3. We help school staff learn how to work with parent and community volunteers.
- ☐ 4. We ask family members how they would like to participate as volunteers at their child's school or in the community, and we respond in a timely manner to their offers of assistance.
- ☐ 5. We encourage family and community members to become involved as
 - ☐ participants in site-based management councils
 - ☐ presenters to students on careers and other topics
 - ☐ assistants with art shows, read-aloud events, theater workshops, book swaps, and other activities
 - ☐ tutors/mentors
 - ☐ chaperones on field trips and other class outings
 - ☐ instructional assistants in classrooms, libraries, and computer labs
 - ☐ non-instructional assistants
 - ☐ from-the-home contributors of baked goods, assembling materials, typing, etc.
- ☐ 6. We offer volunteer opportunities for working and single parents.
- ☐ 7. We have a program to recognize school volunteers.
- ☐ 8. We gather information about the level and frequency of family and community participation in school programs.
- ☐ 9. Other: _____

Governance and Advocacy

- ☐ 1. We encourage parents to attend school board and site council meetings.
- ☐ 2. We assign staff members to help parents address concerns or complaints.
- ☐ 3. We invite staff and parent groups to meet collaboratively, providing space and time to do so.
- ☐ 4. We help families advocate for each other.
- ☐ 5. We involve parents in
 - ☐ revising school and district curricula
 - ☐ planning orientation programs for new families
 - ☐ developing parenting skills programs
 - ☐ establishing membership for site-based councils
 - ☐ hiring staff members.
- ☐ 6. Other: _____

Community Collaboration

- ☐ 1. We act as a source of information and referral about services available in the community for families.
- ☐ 2. We use a variety of strategies to reach out to adults, families, and children of all ages, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds in the community.
- ☐ 3. We encourage local civic and service groups to become involved in schools in a variety of ways such as mentoring students, volunteering, speaking to classes, and helping with fund-raising events.
- ☐ 4. We encourage staff and students to participate in youth service-learning opportunities.
- ☐ 5. We open our school buildings for use by the community beyond regular school hours.
- ☐ 6. We work with the local chamber of commerce or business partnership council and public library to promote adult literacy.
- ☐ 7. We have a program with local businesses that enhances student work skills.
- ☐ 8. We widely publish and disseminate school board meeting notices, summaries, and board policies and agendas, and encourage the feedback and participation of community members.
- ☐ 9. Other: _____

*Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Families in Education Program*

Completed by ➤	for (District, School, or Classroom)	Date
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One-Year Action Plan

School or District _____

School Year _____

- List ONE of your school's major goals for the school year. (*Make copies of this page for each of your school's major goals.*)
- List the specific, measurable results that will show you have reached this goal.

ONE Major Goal:

Desired results for this goal:

How will you measure these results?

Partnership Practices to reach this goal:

Below, write down partnership practices that will help you reach your goal. Your activities should represent more than one of the six types of partnership. Use the following section also to organize and schedule activities that support this goal.

[illegible]

Any extra funds, supplies, or resources needed for these activities?

**Action Plan for Strengthening
Family-School-Community Partnerships**

Area of Focus

Activities

What Will be Done	Purpose of the Activity	By Whom?	When?	Resources/Training Needs	Evidence of Success

School Goals and Results of Partnerships

How Might the Six Types of Involvement Help Your School Reach Its Goals?

ONE MAJOR GOAL that our school has set is

Measurable Results: How will you know when your school reaches THIS goal? *(Specify the changes that you want to produce for the goal you listed above.)*

Partnership Practices: Identify specific partnership activities that directly link to the goal. Then note the specific short-term results expected from each activity. Some goals will be helped by practices in all six types of involvement; others may be helped by practices in just one or two types. Fill in activities only if they will help reach THIS goal.

Practices to Help Us Reach THIS Goal	Expected Short-Term Results
Type 1—Parenting	
Type 2—Communicating	
Type 3—Volunteering	
Type 4—Learning at Home	
Type 5—Decision Making	
Type 6—Collaborating with the Community	

Three-Year Outline from _____ to _____

Reaching Partnership Goals for _____ School

- List **ONE MAJOR GOAL** for your school on each page. (*Make copies of this page for each of your school's major goals.*)
- Next, list **specific, measurable results for this goal for Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3.**
- Finally, list **partnership activities** that will help reach desired results for THIS goal in Years 1, 2, and 3.

ONE MAJOR GOAL:

Desired Results for this Goal by the end of Year 1:

Links with Family-School-Community Partnerships:

Which practices of partnership will help reach the desired results for THIS goal in **Year 1**?

Type 1—Parenting

Type 2—Communicating

Type 3—Volunteering

Type 4—Learning at Home

Type 5—Decision Making

Type 6—Collaborating with the Community

Desired Results for this Goal by the end of Year 2:

Links with Family-School-Community Partnerships:

Which practices of partnership will help reach the desired results for THIS goal in **Year 2**?

Type 1—Parenting

Type 2—Communicating

Type 3—Volunteering

Type 4—Learning at Home

Type 5—Decision Making

Type 6—Collaborating with the Community

Desired Results for this Goal by the end of Year 3:

Links with Family-School-Community Partnerships:

Which practices of partnership will help reach the desired results for THIS goal in **Year 3**?

Type 1—Parenting

Type 2—Communicating

Type 3—Volunteering

Type 4—Learning at Home

Type 5—Decision Making

Type 6—Collaborating with the Community

Web Resources

on Family-School-Community Partnerships

The following list of Internet sites offers partnership practitioners further information, guidance, and ideas about how schools, families, and communities can work together effectively to promote children's learning. Most sites also feature links to other useful sites and resources.

The Wisconsin Department of Public

Instruction website, www.dpi.state.wi.us, offers information on state education programs and initiatives. Click on, "Of Interest to Families," for information on the Wisconsin/National Network of Partnership Schools, the State Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council, parent tips and reproducible materials. Two brochures of particular interest to parents are downloadable: 1) A Parent's Guide to Standards and Assessment, and 2) A template for Grade-Level Brochures for Parents.

The U.S. Department of Education website, www.ed.gov, features the Partnership for Family Involvement on its homepage. Or, click on "Parents and Families" under Audience to find many reproducible articles on a host of learning-related topics for parents of pre-schoolers to college students.

The National Network of Partnership Schools, www.partnershipschools.org, is based at Johns Hopkins University and offers excellent tools and strategies for implementing family-school-community partnerships in schools and classrooms. Wisconsin is a state member of the Network along with about 65 Wisconsin school and district members.

The National Parent Information Network, <http://npin.org>, co-sponsored by the ERIC Clearinghouses on Elementary and Early Childhood Education and Urban Education, includes extensive articles on parenting, listservs, and links to more than 100 sites on education, health and safety, family issues, child development, and parenting.

The Family Education Network, www.familyeducation.com, offers hundreds of brief articles on parenting, links to local sites, and discussion boards that connect parents with on-line experts.

The National Coalition for Parental Involvement in Education, www.ncpie.org, provides a

catalog of resources available from all its member organizations.

The National Association of Partners in Education, www.napehq.org, is a grassroots membership organization dedicated to providing leadership in forming and growing partnerships to ensure the learning success of all children. Its website offers publications, links, and newsletter articles highlighting successful partnership practices.

The National Education Association's site, www.nea.org, with links to the Wisconsin Education Association, www.weac.org, offers a useful parents' section with many tips for teachers, articles on current practices and research, and learning at home strategies.

The Harvard Family Research Project, <http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hfrp>, publishes research findings and provides technical assistance to a nationwide network of practitioners, policy-makers, and educators. The site offers a useful Family-School-Community Partnerships section with models, solutions for sustaining partnerships, and web connections.

Pathways to Social Improvement, www.ncrel.org, is found on the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) website. It offers an extensive and in-depth section on Parent and Family Involvement. The two "Critical Issues" highlighted at this site offer respected reviews of issues and hyperlinks well worth exploring.

Hand in Hand: Parents Schools Communities United for Kids, www.handinhand.org, was developed as a response to Goal 8, the Parental Involvement Goal of the National Education Goals 2000. It was established to share information about programs that value and nurture the family and community role in children's learning. The site is coordinated by the Institute for Educational Leadership and funded by the Mattel Foundation.

At the **National PTA** site, www.pta.org, learn about PTA education groups, and participate in a discussion group, chat room, or bulletin board. The site also offers many links to sites of other organizations concerned about children.

Membership Form for Schools

Wisconsin and National Network of Partnership Schools

Improving Family-School-Community Connections

Please complete and return this form to register as a member of the Wisconsin and National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University. The Key Contact will receive a handbook and other information to help plan a family-school-community partnership program.

Name of School

Date

(Please write school name exactly as you would like it to appear on your Certificate of Membership.)

School District

Name of Action Team Leader/KEY CONTACT

Position

Mailing Address

Telephone ()

Fax ()

Email address

About Your School

Number of students

Number of teachers

Grade levels

Please check (✓) one of the following

☐ My school is joining as part of a Partnership DISTRICT.

☐ My school is joining independent of my district.

Please Estimate

Percent of students who are

_____ African American

_____ American Indian

_____ Asian American

_____ Latino/Hispanic American

_____ White

_____ Other

Percent of families who speak a language other than English at home _____

Percent of children receiving free or reduced lunch _____

Percent of mothers who work full-time or part-time during the school day _____

Percent of fathers who work full-time or part-time during the school day _____

Where is your school located? Large Urban _____ Small Urban _____ Suburban _____ Rural _____

Special Circumstances

Does your school receive Title I funds? _____ Is it a school-wide program? _____

Check all that apply to your school: Public _____ Private _____ Religious Affiliation _____

Magnet / Charter / City-wide _____ Other special program (*describe*) _____

What special factors or problems presently limit the involvement of some of your families?

Five Requirements for Membership

Partnership Schools will:

Yes No

- 1. Create or identify an Action Team for family-school-community partnerships.**

☐ ☐ Can your school name an Action Team to serve as its "action arm" for partnerships?

- 2. Use the framework of six types of involvement to plan a program of partnerships.**

☐ ☐ Can your school use this framework?

- 3. Allocate an annual budget for the work and activities of the Action Team.**

☐ ☐ Can your school allocate these funds?

- 4. Allocate time for an initial day-long team training workshop, and at least one hour per month for the Action Team for family-school-community partnerships to plan, coordinate, and evaluate activities each year.**

☐ ☐ Can your school allocate time for training, planning, and work?

- 5. Complete an annual UPDATE survey to renew school membership in the National Network of Partnership Schools.**

☐ ☐ Can your school's Action Team complete the UPDATE survey each year?

If you cannot answer YES to these five questions, please postpone returning this form until these requirements are met.

Please help us understand where you are starting from in your work on partnerships.**Yes No**

☐ ☐ Do you have a formal written SCHOOL policy about involving families? *(If you have a written school policy about partnerships, please attach it to this form. Thank you.)*

☐ ☐ Does your DISTRICT have a formal written policy about involving families?

☐ ☐ Does your STATE have a formal written policy about involving families?

☐ ☐ Do you have a School Council or similar decision-making unit?

☐ ☐ If yes, do parents serve on that unit?

What is this decision-making unit called? _____

☐ ☐ Do you write annual school improvement plans?

☐ ☐ Do you have a team or group in your school that presently works together to plan and implement activities to involve all families?

☐ ☐ Do you have a paid coordinator who organizes activities to involve all families at all grade levels at school and at home?

If yes, please check: _____ full time _____ part time

☐ ☐ Do you have annual parent-teacher conferences with all families?

☐ ☐ Do you have a formal program to recruit and train school and classroom volunteers?

☐ ☐ Do you have a parent organization (PTA/PTO/other)?

☐ ☐ Do you have a business-school partnership?

☐ ☐ Do you have partnerships with community groups or organizations?

How would you rate your school's connections with families RIGHT NOW?

High	Medium	Low	Does Not Apply	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Involvement of all families at all grade levels
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Activities by all teachers to inform and involve all families...
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	a) in curricular decisions concerning the child
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	b) in weekly interactive homework with the child
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attendance at workshops for parents
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attendance at parent-teacher conferences (all grade levels)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Readiness of school to try new things to involve all families
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Commitment to improving family involvement
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Connections with the community

Does your district or state *presently* help your school develop good partnerships with families?*Please check (✓) whether your district conducts the following activities.***District Wisconsin**

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Staff development specifically on partnerships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Small grants for projects to improve partnerships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Workshops for teachers and parents on partnerships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Dissemination of information on effective practices for family and community involvement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Recognition and/or rewards for good partnerships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Newsletters, surveys, other communications with families |

Other assistance (*please describe*) _____

Please think ahead three years.

What is one of your school's major goals for family-school-community partnerships?

Approval and Support by Principal. (*Required*)

I have discussed our membership in the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University with the Key Contact person named above. I will support the work of our Action Team for family-school-community partnerships.

_____
Superintendent's Signature_____
Superintendent's Name (*please print*)

In Wisconsin, please return this membership form to: Jane Grinde & Ruth Anne Landsverk
 Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
 PO Box 7841
 Madison, WI 53707-7841

Phone: 608-266-9356 or 608-266-9757
 or 1-800-441-4563

Fax: 608-266-2529

Please keep a copy of this form for your records. Thank you!

Membership Form for Districts

Wisconsin and National Network of Partnership Schools

Improving Family-School-Community Connections

Please complete and return this form to register as a member of the Wisconsin and National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University. The Key Contact will receive a handbook and other information to help plan a family-school-community partnership program.

Name of School District

Date

(Please write school district name exactly as you would like it to appear on your Certificate of Membership.)

Name of District Facilitator/KEY CONTACT for the National Network of Partnership Schools:

Position

Mailing Address

Phone ()

Fax ()

Email address

About Your District (LEA): How many schools are in your district?

Elementary Schools _____ Middle Schools _____ High Schools _____

Other Schools (*describe*) _____

Please Give Your Best Estimates for Your District

Number of students _____

Number of classroom teachers _____

Percent of students who are

_____ African American

_____ American Indian

_____ Asian American

_____ Latino/Hispanic American

_____ White

_____ Other

Percent of children receiving free or reduced lunch _____

Percent of families who speak a language other than English at home _____

Special Circumstances

How many school-wide Title I programs? _____

How many Magnet / Charter / City-wide or other schools of choice? _____

What special factors or problems presently limit the involvement of some of some families in your district's schools?

How many Partnership Schools will be developed in your district?

One goal of the National Network of Partnership Schools is to help districts help *all schools* develop comprehensive programs of family-school-community partnerships. In some districts this may be accomplished incrementally by assisting increasing numbers of schools. How many schools in your district will be Partnership Schools with Action Teams for School, Family, and Community Partnerships? Please fill in the expected *cumulative* numbers for the next three years:

2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
_____ elementary school	_____ elementary school	_____ elementary school
_____ middle school	_____ middle school	_____ middle school
_____ high school	_____ high school	_____ high school
_____ other	_____ other	_____ other

**It is necessary to collect a School Membership Form from all schools participating in the National Network of Partnership Schools in 2000-01 as part of your DISTRICT's program.*

Requirements for Membership

DISTRICTS in the National Network will:

Yes No

1. **Assign the equivalent of one full-time facilitator to work with Action Teams for family-school-community partnerships in 15 to 30 schools on their plans, implementations, sharing of activities, and connections with the National Network. Districts with fewer than 15 participating schools must propose a part-time equivalent.**

☐ ☐

Can your district assign the needed FTE facilitator(s) to help your schools?

Fill in the numbers: To start, _____ facilitator(s) will work with _____ schools in this district.

2. **Allocate an annual budget for the work and activities of the District staff.**

☐ ☐

Can your district allocate funds for the salary and program costs for your staff?

3. **Complete an annual UPDATE survey to renew district membership in the National Network of Partnership Schools.**

☐ ☐

Can your district facilitator(s) complete the UPDATE survey each year?

4. **Help each participating school meet these requirements for Partnership Schools:**

a) **Create or identify an Action Team for family-school-community partnerships.**

☐ ☐

Can your district facilitator(s) help each school name an Action Team for Partnerships?

b) **Use the framework of six types of involvement to plan a program of partnerships.**

☐ ☐

Can your district facilitator(s) help each school use this framework?

c) **Identify an annual budget for the work and activities of each school's Action Team.**

☐ ☐

Can your district facilitator(s) help each school identify its budget for partnerships?

Yes No

d) **Allocate time for an initial day-long team training workshop, and at least one hour per month for the Action Team for family-school-community partnerships to plan, coordinate, and evaluate activities each year.**

☐ ☐ Can your district facilitator(s) help schools allocate time for their Action Teams to meet?

e) **Complete the annual UPDATE survey to renew school membership.**

☐ ☐ Can your district facilitator(s) encourage schools to complete the UPDATE survey each year?

5. **OPTIONAL: Create or identify an office or department for family-school-community partnerships.**
(Only for districts with 30 or more schools.)

☐ ☐ Do you have such an office/department?

If No: Can you create or identify this office/department? **Yes No**

**If you cannot answer YES to Questions 1 through 4,
please postpone returning this form until these requirements are met.**

Does your district or state *presently* help your schools develop good partnerships with families?

The National Network of Partnership Schools emphasizes that each Action Team must tailor its program to the needs and interests of its school, families, and students. Several district and state leadership activities maximize schools' chances for developing successful programs.

Please **check** (✓) whether your district conducts the following activities at the present time.

District Wisconsin

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Workshops for educators and parents on partnerships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Staff development specifically on partnerships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Small grants for projects to improve partnerships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Dissemination of information on effective partnership practices |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Recognition and/or rewards for good partnerships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Newsletters, surveys, other communications with families |

Other assistance (please describe) _____

Other background questions for DISTRICTS

Yes No

- ☐ ☐ Does your DISTRICT have a formal written policy about involving families? (If you have a written school policy about partnerships, please attach it to this form. Thank you.)
- ☐ ☐ Does your STATE have a formal written policy about involving families?
- ☐ ☐ Does every school have a School Council or similar decision-making unit?
- ☐ ☐ If YES, do parents serve on every School Council?
- ☐ ☐ Is there a District advisory council that includes parents?
- ☐ ☐ Does every school write an annual school improvement plan?
- ☐ ☐ If YES, are these plans routinely collected and monitored by the district?
- ☐ ☐ Do you have a district office and full-time professional staff that presently assists every school to develop a program of partnership with families?

How would you rate your schools' connections with families RIGHT NOW?

High	Medium	Low	In this DISTRICT
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quality of home-school partnerships in elementary schools
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quality of home-school partnerships in middle schools
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quality of home-school partnerships in high schools
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quality of connections with the community
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	District's commitment to improving family and community involvement
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Schools' commitment to improving family and community involvement

Please think ahead three years.

What is one of your district's major goals for family-school-community partnerships?

Approval and Support by District Superintendent *(Required)*

I have discussed our membership in the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University with the Key Contact person named above. I will support work in this district to help our schools develop and maintain strong programs of family-school-community partnerships.



 Superintendent's Signature

 Superintendent's Name *(please print)*

In Wisconsin, please return this membership form to: Jane Grinde & Ruth Anne Landsverk
 Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
 PO Box 7841
 Madison, WI 53707-7841

Phone: 608-266-9356 or 608-266-9757
 or 1-800-441-4563

Fax: 608-266-2529

Please keep a copy of this form for your records. Thank you!